



Strategic Review of Allotment Provision

April 2012
City of Lincoln Council









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City Hall Beaumont Fee Lincoln LN1 1DD

Issue and revision record

Revision	Date	Originator	Checker	Approver	Description
	01.03.12 ?	Carl Mendel	Shaun Ruffles	Shaun Ruffles	First Issue
		Eileen Thomas 			
	11.04.12	Carl Mendel	Shaun Ruffles	Shaun Ruffles	Second Issue
					
	26.04.12	Eileen Thomas 	Shaun Ruffles	Shaun Ruffles	Final issue
					

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Executive Summary

In November 2011 Mott MacDonald was commissioned by the City of Lincoln Council to prepare a strategic review of allotment provision. Its purpose was:

To provide strategic direction and a clear action plan that will deliver a financially sustainable allotment service that meets demand, has a satisfactory standard of infrastructure and operates in a transparent way that is fair and equitable.

It was also requested that the outputs should be fit for use by the authority to support the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

There are 18 sites managed by the City of Lincoln Council (and a one plot site), all but two of these Council owned statutory sites, with a total of 1153 plots, including 100 or so unlettable plots, with 66 of these being prepared for use. Occupancy is currently 89%.

An extensive consultation exercise was carried out with the Citizens' Panel and with allotment holders. The latter revealed that over a third of allotment holders are now women. However the age distribution is still very much biased towards older age groups with 13% of allotment holders describing themselves as disabled. Taking into account sustainability guidelines and allotment holders' views, it is recommended that ideal travel times to allotments should be less than ten minutes by walking.

Allotment holders are in the main happy with their conditions, with some exceptions. An audit of sites informed by tenants' views, indicates that essential improvements to sites would cost in the order of £815,000. Desirable improvements would cost a further £130,000 or so and there are additional improvements (for instance toilets) that are likely to be requested in the future.

Indications are that there are sufficient sites overall to meet current as well as any latent demand. However, plots are in the wrong places to satisfy even the present waiting list, with a surfeit of sites in the north and a deficit in the south - especially as one of the larger sites in the south at Simon's Hill is highly unpopular. There are no sites at all in the southwest or north east of the City, which contain some of Lincoln's most deprived areas

If current demand was to remain constant there will be a need for between 240 and 560 new plots by 2031 depending on the extent of housing growth. These should be located in areas scheduled for development to the west and north east of Lincoln (areas already deficient in sites) and near the south of the City. Past trends indicate that demand may start to fall again once the current recession is over. However there are a number of factors linked to food security that suggest otherwise and this will need to be monitored.

Although allotment holders are generally happy with the Council's management, two concerns were frequently raised - the problem of plots being left vacant for some time before being re-let and ongoing communication with the Council, especially as regards the speed of response to requests for repairs. Suggestions are put forward to improve these aspects without the need to increase Council resources. However it is accepted that if requests for plots continue to grow,

more resources will eventually be needed. Other suggestions include simplifying the charging structure and letting a maximum of two plots per applicant/group from now on.

About 10% of allotments are currently let to people from outside Lincoln. Although it is felt that current tenants should be allowed to remain, in future it is recommended that sites in Lincoln should be only let to Lincoln residents and that talks should commence with North Kesteven District Council regarding transfer of the management of the Canwick Hill site to them.

Currently there is a financial gap between the aspirations for an improved service and the budget available. The report seeks to identify and qualify the extent of this gap and to suggest options to address this. Integral to this, it is suggested that there should be a modest rise in rents, but discounts for pensioners and the unemployed should continue. A number of other suggestions are made to make small improvements.

The report looks at ways to fund major necessary improvements and pay for between 240-560 new plots over the next twenty years. For the long term it is considered that new sites should be paid for from developer contributions and this should be built into emerging Council planning policy. In the meantime it is suggested that the sale by the Council for housing of one of the surplus northern sites or other redundant land, comprising 0.8ha (2 acres) would pay for immediate improvements. Both of these options would need to accord with planning policy and any statutory site would require the Secretary of State's approval for discontinuance.

It should be noted that this document draws on baseline data provided at the outset and all statistics are based on that snap-shot in time. The service is not a static one and statistics fluctuate all the time. For example 'waiting lists' will have changed between the start of this work and the final draft. However the data used is consistent and the variation in statistics does not detract from the underpinning messages arising from this work.

1. Introduction

In November 2011 Mott MacDonald was commissioned by the City of Lincoln Council to prepare an allotment strategy. Its purpose was:

To provide strategic direction and a clear action plan that will deliver a financially sustainable allotment service that meets demand, has a satisfactory standard of infrastructure and operates in a transparent way that is fair and equitable.

It was also requested that the outputs should be fit for use by the authority for input to a future open space study to support the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), including provision and local accessibility standards. Government advice is that LDF proposals should be realistic and achievable and this planning objective therefore aligns with the operational and financial strands of the study.

There are 18 sites managed by the City of Lincoln (plus one with just one plot), all but two of these Council owned statutory sites, with a total of 1153 plots. This includes approximately 106 currently unlettable plots (with 44 of these being prepared for use as 66 plots). Occupancy is currently 89% but expected to rise.

Since the Second World War when allotment holding reached its peak, demand for allotments nationally, including in Lincoln, has steadily fallen, but there is now evidence, as shown by the current waiting list, that interest in growing food is again rising. Although there can be no guarantee that this recent reversal of the previous trend will continue indefinitely, while demand is growing, the overall costs of the providing the service (as with many Council services) are constrained - and therein lies the challenge.

Modern day legislation has its origins in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 and several subsequent Acts culminating in the 1950 Allotments Act. These established the principle of authorities catering for demand and the concept of 'statutory' allotments, which a local authority cannot sell or convert to other purposes without the Secretary of State's consent.

The original guidance on standards for allotment provision was contained in the 1969 Thorpe report. This has however since been superseded by Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) July 2002 on Open Space which covers all open space, including allotments. Unlike the formulaic approach of previous guidance, PPG17 places an emphasis on the specific needs of each community or neighbourhood. In this respect it should be pointed out that allotment provision can satisfy wider needs than just the production of food, although this in itself is very worthwhile - for instance benefits to physical and mental health, social inclusion and education. There can also be benefits to biodiversity.

The brief asks for:

- A baseline assessment of sites so as to provide a picture of condition and investment needs;
- An estimate of demand over the next twenty years and recommendations for future provision, including locality;
- Consideration of current operational practices and recommendations for changes to improve the efficiency of the service;
- Consideration of the capital investment required for the service with recommendations as to how this might be achieved; and
- Consideration of revenue resources required.

The brief states that the Council wishes to meet any future demand from Lincoln residents within its own boundaries if at all possible, but is not prescriptive as to a 'norm' for an allotment size. In addition to the above a thorough consultation exercise on the proposals has been requested, to be verified by an Equality Impact Assessment. The study builds on previous reports and studies on allotments carried out by the Council, in particular the Review of Allotments published in 2007.

The next chapter outlines the background to the subject and Lincoln context and Chapter 3 sets out the methodology used. Chapter 4 summarises the findings from an extensive consultation exercise. Drawing on these comments Chapter 5 looks at the condition of existing allotments and outlines the improvements that could be introduced, with costs. Chapter 6 look at future demand for allotments as well as the location of this demand and Chapter 7 deals with current operational practices. Ongoing costs and sources of future funding are examined in Chapters 8 and 9 with conclusions and recommendations contained in the final two chapters.

2. Background

2.1 Brief history of allotments in Britain

Allotments were in existence as far back as the Middle Ages when some landowners bequeathed plots to be cultivated by the poor. The enclosures of common land (at its height in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) saw plots being donated to cottagers to compensate for their loss of rights to graze on common land. Allotment holding therefore has its origins in the countryside and it was not until later that it moved to the towns, with the growth of the industrialised age and rapid urbanisation.

The two World Wars resulted in an increase in allotment cultivation, as importing food became more difficult. Allotment holding also grew during the thirties recession. After the Second World War however there was a steady decline in interest, punctuated only by small increases during more difficult times. This was for a number of reasons, including the increased availability of convenience foods and attraction of many other leisure pursuits.

In the last two decades there has been a renewed interest in allotment cultivation, largely as a result of environmental concerns and an interest in locally sourced food - with a commensurate reduction in vacant plots. (Despite this, the Allotments in England Report of Survey 2006 by the University of Derby suggested that there were still surplus plots in many areas). There have also been other community growing initiatives (such as the City Farms and the Community Gardens movement and "Incredible Edible" in Todmorden). The current recession is now providing further impetus to allotment holding, as are increasing densities for new housing and demographic changes leading to the development of more flats.

The Government has also recently begun to take an increased interest in the situation regarding allotments. Its 1997 report on allotments in England "The Future of Allotments" expressed concern about the decline in the number of allotments, largely as a result of development pressures, pointing out their practical and therapeutic value. In March 2010 when the waiting list countrywide had reached 100,000, the then Environment Minister Hilary Benn announced a scheme to allow developers to lease banked land on a temporary basis for allotments, until required for development. In May 2011 the Planning Minister Greg Clark stated that as a result of 50,000 allotments having been sold off over the last fifteen years, there was an urgent need both to stem this decline and provide more sites.

The range of plot-holders has broadened over recent years. More people under 50 years old are now taking an interest in allotments and the proportion of women plot-holders is increasing. Traditionally, a single person or family used a plot. However, over the last few years groups of people have sometimes gardened plots - for example, young people's, community or mental health groups. There have been other changes such as a move to a greater use of organic gardening without chemicals.

2.2 Legislation

2.2.1 Background

Legislation relating to allotments has evolved over a number of years in a piecemeal fashion, initially being intertwined with legislation for small holdings. The key Acts are still mostly in force but with some sections repealed by later legislation. A summary of the key provisions is given below.

2.2.2 Small Holdings and Allotments Acts 1908

This Act repealed and consolidated previous law on the subject and laid down the basis for all subsequent legislation. It places a duty on local authorities to provide sufficient allotments, according to demand. The Act also makes provision for local authorities to compulsorily purchase land to provide allotments.

2.2.3 Land Settlement Facilities Act 1919

Intended to assist returning servicemen from the First World War, this Act opened up allotments to all, not just 'the labouring population'. It established councils as allotment authorities for the first time.

2.2.4 Allotments Act 1922

This Act was established to provide allotment tenants with some security of tenure (later repealed and extended by the Allotments Act 1950). It also provided tenants with greater compensation at the termination of their tenancy and limited the size of an allotment to one-quarter of an acre, specifying that it should be used mostly for growing fruit and vegetables.

2.2.5 Allotments Act 1925

This legislation required local authorities to recognise the need for allotments as part of town planning schemes (repealed under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act). More importantly it established the concept of 'statutory' allotments which a local authority could not sell or convert to other purposes without consent from the Secretary of State.

2.2.6 Allotments Act 1950

This included:

- Amendment of the provisions relating to rents that may be charged for allotments;
- Extension of the period of notice to quit under the 1922 Act to 12 months for allotment gardens;
- Compensation payable to plot holders at whatever season of the year the tenancy was terminated;
- Rights for authorities to seek compensation from plot holders who had allowed their plot to deteriorate through neglect on quitting; and
- Allowance for certain forms of livestock (hens and rabbits) to be kept although this could be, in some cases, restricted by local by-laws.

2.2.7 The Local Government Act 1972

This amended allotments legislation in respect of a number of details, for example, removing the requirement upon local authorities to establish allotments committees (contained in Section 12 of the Allotments Act 1925).

Other Acts which have impacted upon the designation of land for allotments include the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981.

2.3 Standards for allotment provision

2.3.1 Formulaic approach

The 1969 Thorpe Report recommended a minimum provision equivalent to 15 plots per 1,000 households. (roughly 0.18ha per 1,000 population allowing for circulation space). It is estimated that since 1969 some 30% of the then available allotment land had been lost. In light of this, the National Society of Allotment

Holders and Gardeners (NSALG) recommend that the minimum provision today should be 20 standard (300 sq yd) plots per 1,000 households (roughly 0.3ha per 1,000 population, allowing for circulation space). This takes into account the fact that the size of household has fallen from around 3.1 to 2.29 during this time.

However, the Survey of Allotments, Community Gardens and City Farms, carried out by the University of Derby on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2006 suggested that the national average provision was round 7 plots per 1,000 households (or 0.5ha per 1,000 population, allowing for circulation space). Standards have been measured in different ways over the years. For the purposes of this report both of the above measurements are referenced.

2.3.2 Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) July 2002 and Assessing Needs and Opportunities – a Companion Guide (Sept 2002)

This covers all open space, including allotments. Unlike the formulaic approach of other guidance, PPG17 places an emphasis on the specific needs of each community or neighbourhood and local authorities are advised to undertake robust assessments of need. It is suggested that authorities should conduct audits of their provision, which besides dealing with quantity should cover quality, the use made of facilities and barriers to use.

2.4 Brief history of allotments in Lincoln

Thanks should be given to Geoff Tann at the start of this section whose *“Lincoln’s Allotments a History” (2008)* gives a detailed description of the evolution of allotment growing in the City. Possibly the first example of allotments in Lincoln was cottager gardens provided in Lower Long Leys Road in the eighteenth century. Later in the mid nineteenth century, plots to the east of Brant Road were donated by the Chartist movement, in order to provide permanent employment. The earliest recorded allotments as we now know them however, were privately rented allotments laid out in 1884 on either side of Yarborough Crescent and a not for profit site started up a year later by the Cooperative Society at Greetwell Road.

The Church had a major hand in setting up allotment sites in Lincoln. Often Glebe land, formally worked to supplement the income of the parish clergy, was let as allotment land - with the same purpose in mind or used to assist poor parishioners. The Ermine allotment site and Wragby Rd allotment site (in part), now owned by the Council, are the only examples however that remain.

The 1908 Allotments and Small Holdings Act placed a duty on councils to provide allotments in line with demand. In 1911 there were just eleven small sites in the City including the current Yarborough Crescent and Clarence B sites, but by 1913 this number had risen to 84 plots. Food shortages during the First World War led to the City Council forming an Allotments Sub-Committee in 1917. The following year a Schedule of Lands within the City was produced to identify all uncultivated land and by the next month the tally of Council run plots had risen to 406, many rented from private landowners. The Monks Road Allotment Association was formed in 1917 as was the Lincoln Allotment Holders’ Association. Soon there was an extensive social network organised by the Lincoln and District Allotment Holders Association with shows, events and classes. Moreover the interest in growing vegetables was supported by an expanding seed market.

The 1922 Allotment Act gave more security to allotment holders and resulted in the setting up of the Lincoln Smallholdings and Allotments Committee with allotment holder representation and the appointment of an Allotments Superintendent. It is noticeable that the replacement of slums after the war with houses with gardens reduced the demand for allotments in these areas.

The 1930s recession resulted in activity by the Council to ease the effects of unemployment and led to the laying out of Simon's Hill. Representatives on the Council Smallholdings and Allotments Committee included the Workers Educational Association (WEA) which was also involved in the provision of allotments elsewhere in the City; also the Society of Friends (Quakers) who assisted with seeds. By 1934 there were a total of 1743 plots in the City and three sites were self managed. However, by the end of the thirties interest in allotments seems again to have dwindled.

We move onto the Second World War, when under the Cultivation of Lands (Allotments) Order 1939 and subsequent "Dig for Victory" campaign more allotments were to be provided. The provision of additional land by the Council was accompanied by a search for uncultivated land - including private gardens and restrictions on the keeping of pigs, hens and rabbits were removed. As in the First World War the Second World War encouraged the development of a thriving network of allotment communities. One of Lincoln's three surviving allotment associations, the Boultham Allotment Holders Association was formed in 1942 as a breakaway group to the much older Lincoln and District Allotment Holders' Association.

The end of the Second World War enabled development to restart and with it the pressures on allotment land increased. Some allotment land was sold off and often poorer replacement land provided; this was despite the formation of the Lincoln Federation of Allotments to resist this. By 1951 there were 199ha (491 acres) of allotments – either owned or managed by the Council and roughly a fifth of these were statutory.

It was later in that decade that the allotment holding started to decline and this downward spiral continued for the next thirty years, with rents being gradually raised to compensate for lost income. This was compounded by neglected plots and pilfering. Many former allotment sites were used for garages or converted into public open space and it is recorded that half plots were introduced on the Mainwaring site in the sixties to encourage greater take up of plots.

The eighties did see a number of changes in those who worked sites with women and younger people starting to become involved. As unemployment rose again a training scheme for the unemployed was also introduced and there was the first acceptance that disabled people could garden with a raised bed for wheelchair users provided at Long Leys. It is significant that an offer to the North Lincolnshire Horticultural Society and Boultham Gardeners' Association around this time, to manage their own sites, was turned down due to lack of volunteers.

The population of Lincoln has grown considerably over the years although the area dedicated to allotment cultivation is around a fifth of what it was 60 years ago. However, after many decades of decline, demand for allotments is beginning to grow again and the demographic characteristics of tenants are widening.

The lessons to be learnt from the above to a large extent mirror those from elsewhere, namely:

- A pattern of increased interest, supported by encouragement from the Council, during or just after wars and in hard times. Support from a number of voluntary and church bodies during these periods and even use of some private gardens;
- Frequent relocation of sites especially during periods of redevelopment (Geoff Tan's analysis suggest that over 70 sites have been lost, most of these to development, over the last century);
- A lessening of interest in redeveloped areas where gardens are provided;
- A falling off of demand since the late fifties attributed to changing lifestyles but a revival of interest in very recent times; and
- A gradual widening of the demographic characteristics of allotment holders.

2.5 Recent Council activity

In 2000 a Best Value review of the allotments service was undertaken by the Council and an allotment strategy drawn up. This stated that sites should have:

- Well maintained access roads within the site allowing direct access for vehicles to plots;
- A water supply with no plots more than 50m from a tap;
- An ongoing maintenance programme for and preparation of vacant plots prior to letting;
- Use of surplus plots for compatible uses such as grazing;
- Secure fencing to prevent trespass, theft and vandalism according to location (e.g. steel palisade, blackthorn hedging);
- A response to written applications for an allotment within two working days; an immediate response if face to face;
- Availability of allotments to be advertised and promoted in an effort to increase take up of allotments (a budget of £1500 to be established for this purpose);
- The Council to consider sympathetically requests for sheds (new sheds to be constructed in brick/block work/containers to prevent arson);
- The Council to carry out environmental improvements after a review of sites in association with the Lincoln Green Environmental Partnership, maximising use of outside funding;
- Formation of Allotment Associations for each site to be encouraged by the Council; and
- The Council to develop an allotment manual to be given to new allotment holder with key contacts and practical gardening advice.

No resources were provided for the delivery of the above, so it was not possible to progress many of these recommendations.

At the Recreation, Leisure and Tourism Committee meeting in January 2002 consultation results and evaluation sheets were submitted on four under used sites – Wragby Road, Long Leys Road, Yarborough Crescent and Sincil Bank, as a result of which it was resolved that part of the Yarborough Crescent site be closed and any affected plot holders be relocated (This site was mothballed after this but is being reopened at the time of drafting).

In 2005 an Allotments Strategy Working Group consisting of Members and allotment holders, was set up to review allotments. This presented its findings to the Policy Review Scrutiny Committee in early 2007.

The group identified 10 main aims:

- To have sites which are welcoming and accessible to all;
- To have healthy safe and secure allotments;
- To have well maintained and clean allotments;
- To create allotments which encourage sustainable practices;
- To improve and encourage biodiversity and conservation;
- To promote community involvement and social inclusion;
- To work in partnerships with groups and agencies to support and develop the use of allotments;
- To recognise the valuable cultural and landscape heritage of allotments;
- To have a marketing plan for allotments; and
- To improve the management of allotment sites.

In brief the agreed recommendations were as follows:

- A dedicated fulltime allotments officer;
- A detailed allotment strategy to be produced;
- Consideration to be given to disposing of underused sites/parts of sites and relocation in order to fund capital improvements to sites (funding to be directed to areas without allotments) to be determined within the planning context of maintaining open spaces in the City;
- Contact to be made with voluntary groups e.g. those with disabilities, to gauge their interest in taking on plots;

- Consideration to be given to letting smaller than half size plots;
- A pilot on one or two sites of one ready to let allotment, available at all times;
- Effective enforcement action to be taken with regard to uncultivated plots;
- The Equality and Diversity Officer to explore funding opportunities for people with special needs;
- Consideration be given to the best way of encouraging an organic approach to gardening;
- A group, including allotment holders, to be set up to support implementation of recommendations; and
- An Action Plan to be produced and monitored.

Again, no resources were provided for the delivery of the above, so it was not possible to progress most of these recommendations.

The report also suggested that the Canwick Hill site, outside the City boundary and leased from Oxford University, be closed down since this largely catered for people from outside the authority, with provision made elsewhere for those allotment holders who lived within the City. (This has not been closed down).

A 2006 Lincoln Open Space audit noted the lack of allotments in several highly deprived wards and lack of wheelchair access, suggesting one or two plots were designated for wheelchair users. At the February 2007 meeting of the Allotments Working Group, it was stated, following a survey of disabled users, that better access and a nearby water supply was of greater importance to disabled users than raised beds. The provision of half size plots and toilets was also mentioned. As a result Officers were asked to investigate specialist funding streams.

2.6 Current planning policy

The Local Plan was adopted in August 1998 running until 2011. (It still has some materiality for development management decisions pending approval of a substitute document but there are also a number of “saved” policies which carry full weight - referred to in the next section). The chapter on Environment and Open Space points out that although Lincolnshire contains large areas of open space, much of it farmland, Lincoln itself is a tightly contained urban district, within which the remaining open spaces are under increasing pressure by having to compete with other land use requirements. The basis for the open space strategy is a series of *Green Wedges*, including some allotment land, which bring continuous or closely linked open spaces into the heart of the city. Therefore any proposal to abandon allotments to other uses must bear this key strategy in mind.

The plan points out that the public’s demand for allotments has been in decline since its peak in the interwar to immediate post war years. This is reflected in the reducing amount of land in Lincoln set aside for allotment purposes. Total area of allotments was 199ha (2.80ha per 1,000 population) in 1951 but only 55ha (0.64ha per 1,000 population) in 1994 with 75% occupancy at that time. It attributes this decline to more homes with gardens, improved availability and choice of cheap food, an increase in the variety of leisure pursuits and demand for developable land. Given this trend of continuous decline over four decades it accepts that the overall demand for allotments may well continue to decline throughout the plan period. However, Policy 51: Allotments states that:

Planning permission will not be granted for development involving the change of use of allotment land unless:

- *The allotment concerned is substantially under used, has remained so over a significant period, the prospect for increased demand for plots on it appears unlikely to justify its retention, and arrangements are made for the transfer to other allotments of remaining tenants.*

And subject to the above:

- *Where the allotment falls within a green wedge, the land involved is to be retained in a form of open space use (which may include tree planting schemes) which does not detract from the wedge's ecological interest or landscape value.*

A number of sites were proposed for discontinuance at this time, as follows:

Boultham Park	The Secretary of State's agreement is to be sought for a reduction of 2ha from the overall area of 4.6ha; the surplus land to be let for grazing.
Greenbank Drive	The Secretary of State's agreement to be sought for discontinuance of this 0.3ha site much of which is vacant. The site is to be used for public open space in conjunction with adjacent area.
Mainwaring	This is a temporary site leased from the hospital NHS trust; to be developed by the hospital as part of an ongoing process.
Skewbridge	This is a non statutory site and a remnant of a larger discontinued site. It is to be allocated (together with an adjacent private allotment site and land let for grazing) for public open space, in conjunction with the wider development of the area.
Wragby Road	The Secretary of State has approved discontinuance of 3.2ha of this site. The site is undermined by limestone workings which prejudices its use for built development. The western part is therefore to be retained in allotment use and the eastern part allocated as public open space
Woodhall Drive	The Secretary of State has approved the discontinuance of this site, to be used for housing
Yarborough Road	The Secretary of State's approval will/has been sought for discontinuance of this largely abandoned site. Ground conditions, limited access and its sensitive location suggest a future use as a community park with limited scope for housing.

In the event, only three of these sites - Mainwaring, Skewbridge and Woodhall Drive have been entirely closed. Part of the Wragby site has been turned over to wildlife and a smaller area of Boultham Park than envisaged, has been released. One plot only was kept at Yarborough Road.

Other relevant aspects of the plan are a policy to promote biodiversity through developer contributions (Policy 45B) and an objective which permeates much of the plan regarding the need to provide local facilities as far as practicable, in order to minimise journey lengths and reduce dependence on the car.

2.7 Emerging planning policy

Lincoln's Sustainable Community Strategy published in 2009 presents a vision for the City until 2020. The three main aims - to develop Lincoln as a sustainable city, to target neighbourhoods and to regenerate Communities - all have some resonance for this allotments strategy. Moreover the key issues to a greater or lesser extent link to the subject namely:

- Our safety;
- Our health;
- Our economy;
- Our children and young people; and
- Our environment.

In April 2009 the Council resolved to progress a replacement for the Local Plan - namely a joint Local Development Framework (LDF) with the adjacent districts of North Kesteven and West Lindsey. (This will sit under the Sustainable Community Strategies for the three Districts). Formal agreement to seek parliamentary approval for a Joint Strategic Planning Committee for Central Lincolnshire was reached in

April 2009 leading to the Committee's establishment in October 2009 and the programme commenced the following year. The Core Strategy Development Planning Document (DPD) is due to be submitted in 2012 with a date for adoption in early 2013.

A number of policies from the Local Plan were saved in 2007 pending completion of the Local Development Framework. This included Policy 51 Allotments, Policy 43 Green Wedges and Other Major Open Spaces and Policy 45B on developer contributions for biodiversity. It is likely that these policies will remain in replacement LDF documents but it will be sometime before these are in place.

2.8 Other Strategies

2.8.1 Lincoln's Place Making Strategy (2009)

A key objective of the Lincoln's Place Making Strategy developed with North Kesteven, West Lindsey and the County Council is "to ensure that Lincoln's neighbourhoods remain viable and sustainable with access to daily needs with 10 minutes average walking distance". The strategy also seeks "to safeguard Lincoln's distinct landscape character, protect and promote its biodiversity and ensure that green space meets the needs of existing and future residents".

2.8.2 Lincoln Biodiversity Audit 2008

This seeks to encourage greater biodiversity in the City and ensure that new development contributes to the delivery of green infrastructure in the region.

2.8.3 Other relevant policy

Other relevant policy includes:

- The Strategic Plan 2011 which contains priorities for tackling health inequalities and delivering high quality leisure services for all sectors of the community;
- The Best Value Performance Plan 2011 which amongst other objectives seeks to develop better leisure facilities in the City, particularly those which promote physical activity;
- The Council's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2011 which identifies the importance of developing projects which provide facilities for young people; and
- The Leisure in Lincoln Strategic Needs Assessment 2011 which refers to the benefits of leisure activities in improving the quality of life and range of opportunities for local people, tackling health inequalities and meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged communities.

2.9 Description of current provision

There are 18 allotment sites (19 if the one plot on the Yarborough Road site is also included) comprising 1153 plots with a total area of 44.07ha. There are 1047 lettable plots and approximately 106 unlettable plots (mainly plots that are not considered suitable for letting due to other factors such as flooding, overgrowth, being inaccessible). This includes 44 plots which are now being prepared as 66 new plots on the Yarborough Crescent site. All of the Council owned sites have statutory protection. As well as managing these, the Council also manages two privately owned non statutory sites, one of these at South Common, the other at Canwick Hill - which is the only site outside the City boundary, located to the southeast of the City in North Kesteven District Council.

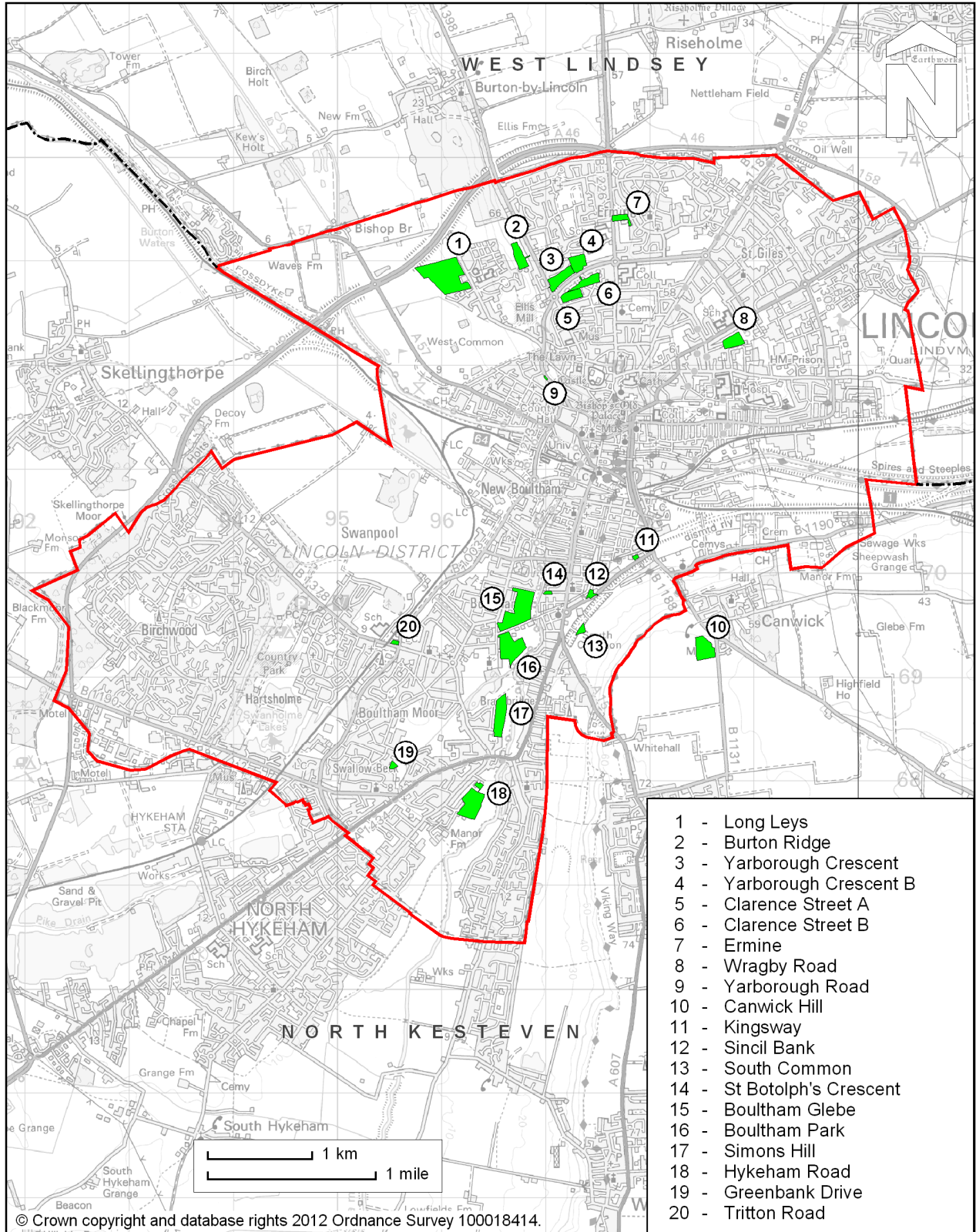
Figure 2.1 shows that sites are distributed across the northern and southern sections of the City running from east to west. There are no sites at all in the central areas, in the north east or southwest. Sites vary in size from very large to very modest. There is a group of three particularly large sites close together in the south (Boultham Glebe, Boultham Park and Simon's Hill). Similarly there is a cluster of five large sites in the northwest (Long Leys, Burton Ridge, Yarborough Crescent, Clarence Street A and Clarence Street B).

10% of plots are rented by people who live outside Lincoln. Plots are a range of sizes, but tend to be on the large side compared with those of some other councils. Tenants generally let one plot but a few have half plots and some take on two plots. There are also two tenants who have more than 6 plots and an agricultural tenant (on the Long Leys Road site) who has legal rights of occupation on 37 plots for grazing. Most plots are let to one person or sometimes couples. Four social/health orientated groups also rent plots and one school.

Although the Council manages all the sites, there are three Allotment Associations in the City which provide advice – Monks Road Allotments Association, Boultham Allotments Association and the North Lincoln Horticultural Society (NLHS).

More detail of the provision is provided within Chapter 5

Figure 2.1 Location of allotment sites



Source City of Lincoln Council

3. Methodology

3.1 Consultation

3.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the consultation exercise was:

- To obtain views on demand for new allotments and their location (including suppressed demand);
- If it was established that there is a demand, to look at various options for increasing the number of allotments; and
- In the case of current allotment holders, to assess their satisfaction with sites and management arrangements.

It was important for the consultation overall to reach a representative cross section of Lincoln's population by age, sex and ethnicity. This was therefore verified by an Equality Impact Assessment.

3.1.2 Citizens' Panel

The Citizens' Panel has 800 members and is balanced to reflect the demographic makeup of Lincoln's population; this was therefore selected as a method of ensuring that the study encompassed a robust assessment of need. Attached in **Appendix A** is a copy of the survey form. This addresses the first two of the three objectives above.

3.1.3 Allotment holders: workshops and survey

Four workshops were arranged for current allotment holders. These were staged in easily accessible locations in different areas of the City during January 2012, so as to avoid the busy period running up to Christmas. Two were held in the evenings, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, to aid attendance. Events were well advertised by way of letters to each tenant. The format employed was a short talk on the current situation, with break out groups addressing a number of questions relating to the three objectives listed above. People were also shown suggestions for an ideal design using the Ermine site as an example. There was a final roundup for feedback.

In addition to the workshops a more in depth survey was sent to all allotment holders (**Appendix A**).

3.1.4 Other consultation

A number of letters were received, including one from the NLHS. The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for allotments, both of whom rent allotments (one of these located outside the City), were also interviewed.

It was agreed that the Council would provide feedback on progress to those who had replied to letters or come to workshops

3.2 Assessment of sites and investment needs

An assessment was carried out of existing allotment provision to provide a picture of current condition and investment needs. Key aspects to consider (see attached **Appendix B**) were derived from guidance on allotments from bodies such as the National Society of Allotment Holders and Gardeners, the Green Flag scheme (used to assess the quality of open spaces) and local organisations. These were then discussed

with the Council's allotment service. The findings were also supplemented with views from allotment holders received at the four workshops and from the survey. Sites were assessed by a qualified landscape architect. In some cases additional information (on marketing or use of peat, for instance) was added after discussion with the Council.

The sites themselves were considered against the following criteria:

- Accessibility – by different modes and ease of access within sites, Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance;
- Vacancy levels – understanding the reason for variation;
- Level and standard of facilities – e.g. huts, communal facilities, rubbish collection, water supply, lighting, toilets etc;
- Quality of fencing, paths and other furniture;
- Safety – personal safety, perception of crime, vandalism, security;
- Cleanliness, maintenance – fences, hedges, mowed and hard surfaces, litter and waste;
- Biodiversity – wildlife value, composting, no peat;
- Attractiveness/Infrastructure – size of land, efficiency of layout, plot sizes, visual appearance, surroundings (in terms of noise, air quality, land uses); observations regarding condition of soils, productivity, vermin;
- Drainage; and
- Information – signage, notices.

A scoring system was used from 1- 5 for each criteria to obtain an overall picture. Where the function was deemed necessary but absent a 0 was entered (**Appendix B**)

Investment needs were then assessed for each site; a distinction being made between what might be regarded as “essential” improvements to allow for successful cultivation and “desirable” improvements.

3.3 Assessment of demand

Since the situation with regard to number of lettings, size of waiting list and so on, changes almost weekly the figures used for this report are correct as at November 1st 2011.

Current demand was gauged from

- A review of waiting lists and popularity of sites;
- Consideration of the impact of location on demand;
- An estimate of other latent or suppressed demand taken from the Citizens' Panel; and
- Information from the allotment holders' workshops and survey.

Future demand up to 2031 was estimated from:

- Estimates of the likely increase in population and its location (from the emerging LDF and other documents); and
- Past and future trends in allotment holdings both locally and nationally and the factors which affect this;

The criteria for the preferred location of any new sites related to:

- Current distribution in relation to future areas of growth;
- Areas of deprivation/areas with small or no gardens where growing food could be of benefit to low income households;
- Policy relating to travel distances and allotment holders' views on this subject; and

The potential for smaller plots (which would be one way of catering for increased demand), was also taken into consideration.

3.4 Consideration of operational practices

The brief asks for a review of the Council's operation of allotments and resources available/required. Council Officers were interviewed and data collected on how allotments are managed, method of advertising plots, letting arrangements and tenancy agreements.

Historical and forecast revenue costs of the service (staffing and other costs minus income from rents) were reviewed, as well as any recent or proposed capital spending.

3.5 Future capital investment

The estimate of future capital costs of the service over the next few years included costs of improving current provision together with the cost of providing/relocating or even disposing of sites, should this be advisable. Sources of future funding both from Council controlled initiatives (such as section 106 funding or the Community Infrastructure Levy) or outside grants/sponsorship were also considered.

4. Consultation

4.1 Previous consultation exercises

4.1.1 Open Space Place Check Report May 2007

This report carried out a survey of local usage of some open spaces. At the time there were 17 allotment sites with 928 lettable plots and 86% occupancy, with a further 80 plots which were overgrown. Smallest site was Kingsway and the largest site was Boultham Park. No sites had toilets and on some there was only one water tap.

28 allotment holders were interviewed - the majority of whom were between 20 and 60. Most lived within 1/4 mile of their site and walked there daily. Allotment holders recognised the health and social benefits of having an allotment, although there were some comments about vandalism. Top scoring sites were Wragby Road and Hykeham Road followed by Burton Ridge and Greenbank Drive. Lowest scoring sites were Tritton Road and Ermine. The survey noted that two wards which contain pockets of deprivation (Birchwood, and Glebe) did not have any allotment sites. Users suggested that there should be some plots for disabled people at the entrance to larger sites.

4.1.2 2007 Allotment holders' survey

A survey was used to inform the Allotment Strategy (mentioned in Chapter 2). 261 allotment holders responded to the survey (roughly 1/3 of plot holders) with 10% of these being non Lincoln residents. All sites were represented, but some with only one respondent. The survey suggested that almost a third of allotment holders were now women. 92% classified themselves as white British and most of the rest were white European with four black/other respondents (which closely mirrored the composition in Lincoln). Most allotment holders tend to be older age groups with 57% over 60 (5% of these over 80). 32% were between 40 and 59; 11% were under 40. Interestingly almost half stated that they had a disability (although another question indicated that only 6% felt themselves unable to work because of this). Two thirds indicated that if they became unable to stand they would like their plot adapted. 50% were retired, 40% in full or part time work, the rest were unable to work, at home or in one case, in full time education.

1/3 had had their sites for over 16 years, some a very long time. However, exactly half had been tenants for less than 5 years, indicating a new influx of allotment holders. Nearly all found out about their allotments by asking the Council and had got their first choice site.

In terms of getting to their allotments nearly two thirds got there by foot or bicycle. The others used their cars, practically no one going by bus. This equates with the fact that two thirds lived less than a mile from their allotments. Most of the rest were less than 3 miles away.

Only 20% of allotment holders felt that their plots were well maintained when passed over to them. Most complaints centred on them being derelict or overgrown but there were also comments about poor drainage, glass and litter. For roughly half, vandalism was a problem on their site. 70% were satisfied with the water supply and a similar percentage felt that they could get bulky materials easily to their plot. For 82% ability to turn their car was good or adequate and 63% could turn their vehicles easily enough.

Allotments were mostly used for vegetables but also for flowers and fruit. 12% of respondents kept animals or birds. Nearly 70% of respondents stated that they wanted to garden organically. Significantly 69% of respondents stated that they would be prepared to pay a higher rent if money was ring fenced for allotment improvements

4.2 Citizens' Panel

352 people replied to the Citizens' Panel. Practically all (94%) of respondents did not have an allotment. (The responses of those who did have an allotment have been taken into account in the next section). Of the 9% who had once had an allotment, nearly all of these were in Lincoln. Most had been given up due to pressures of time. Poor security was the next highest factor. Comments revealed that larger gardens, and disability/energy required to look after an allotment were also reasons.

Those who had never had an allotment gave lack of interest (29%) and lack of time (26%) as the main reasons for this. Only 9% stated they were not aware that allotments were available for rent in the City and 5% felt they were too far away. Expense was not a key factor (1%). Practically all of the remaining comments (21%) related to the fact that people already had sufficient size gardens, though disability/old age, security, length of waiting list and distance were also mentioned.

Interestingly 30% of those who responded stated that they would like an allotment if the conditions were right. Experience suggests that when faced with the reality of having an allotment some of this support might dwindle. However, even if only a third of this number retained their interest, this is one indication of latent demand.

Most (45%) said they would be prepared to take 10-20 minutes to walk to their allotment whereas slightly fewer (32%) opted for less than ten minutes walk. 13% stated that were prepared take up to a 10 minutes drive or bus ride whereas the remaining 20% were happy to travel for longer.

Respondents were told that the rent for an average size allotment was around £46 a year with discounts for pensioners and the unemployed. 79% thought that this was about right. Figures suggested by those who didn't agree with this sum ranged from a modest £10-20 per year to £400 per year. Most suggestions however were evenly divided between £50-60 per year and £100 per year. A large majority (82%) thought that the discounts for pensioners and the unemployed should remain; although only just under half (46%) felt that the discounts for those who rented multiple plots should continue.

Conditions felt to be essential for renting an allotment were water supply (96%), security (80%) and good drainage (70%). Next items felt to be essential were parking (60%), facilities for disabled people (58%) and rubbish collection (56%). 45% felt toilets were essential but fewer considered lighting (27%), a notice board (24%) or communal shed (20%) to be essential. All these items however were considered to be useful to a greater or lesser extent.

When asked if they would be prepared to take an allotment if it were half size, interestingly over two thirds of answers were negative. Suggested locations for new allotments were evenly split between north, south and centre; with few sites suggested in the northeast or south west.

4.3 Workshops

Four workshops were held in January in different parts of the City. They were attended by a total of 160 people. The answers to questions raised in the breakout groups have been taken into account in the next section and recorded comments from each of the workshops are included in **Appendix C**.

Common themes from all of the workshops were, in no particular order:

- Difficulty of communication with Council Officers (especially face to face);
- Response time for repairs is slow;
- Need for a full time Allotments Officer (linked to the above issues);
- Sites are left vacant for too long before being let and ground preparation is an issue;
- Security/vandalism is a problem at many sites;
- There is a need for more disabled facilities;
- Water supply is often inadequate /pressure can be poor (including a suggestion that water should be metered for each plot);
- Drainage is poor on some sites;
- There is a need for rubbish collections; and
- The discount should be removed for multiple allotments.

Most complaints came from the first workshop attendees who were indignant, given that there had been a survey in 2007, that money was being spent on consultants, which could be better used for improvements. This workshop asked for and were promised a detailed breakdown of the costs of the service, believing that there were savings that could be made.

Most attendees felt that the recent move by the Council to provide half size plots had been successful, provided good access was possible to the rear half plot. There were mixed views on the need for toilets and communal sheds; also whether rotation prior to letting, was a good idea.

People differed on an ideal travel time, some feeling the quality of the site was more important than distance. Parking was a problem in some cases and on larger sites many people wanted to be able to drive to get to their plots. Some wanted foxes, rabbits and other vermin better controlled, although others pointed out that foxes got rid of rabbits. There were many complaints about the need for better security against thieves and vandalism and there was one comment from a lady who was threatened by a man with a knife who was stealing her chickens.

There were also mixed views on the level of charges, although many felt they were too complicated. Some people wanted to be able to sell their produce/others feared that this could lead to abuse. Suggestions for grants included lottery funding and sponsorship from local companies.

4.4 Letter from North Lincoln Horticultural Society

A letter is attached from NLHS (**Appendix C**). In summary this states that although the aim should be for the income from allotments to equal expenditure, for this to happen there should first be an open dialogue with the Council. Comments in the order in which they were made, centre on:

- The size of the water bill and suspicion that much of this is due to leakage - the NLHS suggests meters for each plot;
- Comparison to be made with the cost of other Councils' maintenance contracts;
- The need for a rationalised scale of rents, with discounts for multiple plots removed;
- The need for imaginative ways to address poor security;
- Improved management of sites and enforced tenancy agreements, requiring more resources;
- Suggestions for some responsibilities to be devolved to the allotment holders;
- Making small savings by reducing the number of letters sent out to allotment holders and sharing these with Council tax bills;
- The need for speedier letting avoiding the need to rotate again when plots are left empty for a long time;
- Making savings by avoiding repetition of consultation exercises; and
- New housing development to include provision for allotments.

4.5 Allotment holders' survey

A questionnaire was sent to all allotment holders. 319 forms were returned, 34 of which did not specify the respondent's site (these have been taken into account overall). A number of forms were from two people, normally partners or friends who managed the site together. Every site was well represented in relation to the numbers of tenants on it, including 59 responses from Long Leys. However there was only one response apiece from Kingsway and from Ermine (the latter site is vacant to all intents and purposes). Comments relating to specific sites and essential/desirable/non essential improvements have been included in the next section looking at individual sites.

38% of respondents were female, suggesting an increase from the 2007 survey. The age distribution however, is still very much biased towards older age groups with 36% over 65 and 28% between 55 and 64. 20% were between 45 and 54 and 12% between 35 and 44. Very few (4%) were under 34 and only one person was between 16 and 24.

13% described themselves as disabled. Overwhelmingly (97%) respondents were white British (this is a higher proportion than in 2007), with only seven people who were white European, one who was Asian British and one mixed race Caribbean. 45% were in full or part time employment; 45% were retired, 3% unemployed and 3% full or part time at home. One person was in full time education.

The vast majority of respondents had one plot. There were 32 half plots including two half plots let on different parts of the site to one tenant. 28 people had two plots, six had three and one had four or more plots. In addition to growing fruit and vegetables, many people cited exercise or social benefits as a reason for having an allotment. Other people grew flowers or had chickens. Several mentioned peace and quiet, biodiversity and the sheer enjoyment afforded by this activity. Most respondents (76%) stated they gardened organically.

A surprising number of respondents (59%) had rented their allotment for less than five years, indicating the recent upsurge of interest in allotment growing. The next highest figure (16%) was for 6-10 years, with 8% for 11-15 years, 5% for 16 to 20 years. 12% had had their allotment for over twenty years, a few for more than thirty years. Several respondents mentioned the benefits of being able to learn from these long time tenants.

Most people (60%) had found out about renting an allotment by contacting the Council. 28% had found about one from a friend. A few people had learnt about one from their family or seen a site near to where they lived. Only two people had seen information from an advert/web. In 79% of cases the allotment was in a poor condition when passed to the tenant. One reason for this no doubt is that they have been out of commission for many years. Never the less, there were a number of comments about the hard work involved in restoring such plots.

Respondents used a variety of ways to get to their site often choosing to use the car if they had heavy tools to carry, which they wanted to keep secure at home. The most popular way was by car (43%) but 36% also said they walked to the site and 19% cycled. Practically nobody used a bus or motorbike. Nearly everybody took under twenty minutes to get to their allotment, 63% of these in under ten minutes and most were happy with this travel time. This is a good indication of how far people are prepared to travel, many preferring a local facility. The vast majority of respondents visited their site either once or twice a week in the growing season.

Figure 4.1 Satisfaction levels

How satisfied are you with:	Very satisfied %	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied %
Maintenance of paths and tracks?	6	39	27	28
Maintenance of boundary hedges?	5	48	23	24
Provision of water?	23	48	18	11
Security?	7	37	25	31
Drainage?	12	69	13	6
Parking?	13	60	16	11

Figure 4.1 shows that generally views are divided as to the standard of maintenance of paths and tracks. Detailed comments on each site have been appended to the next section. However this appears to be a particular issue with Long Leys, Boultham Glebe, Boultham Park and Canwick Hill. There were also some complaints from Yarborough Crescent, Greenbank Drive and Hykeham Road.

There is a similar picture with just over half of respondents satisfied with maintenance of boundary hedges/fences, mainly relating to security issues. Particular problems appear to occur at Boultham Glebe, Boultham Park, Simon's Hill and Sincil Bank. . There were also some complaints at St Botolph's Crescent and South Common.

In terms of security the results are also fairly even although with more people being worried about security than not. Problems in many cases related to sites which are not properly fenced/gated, which had resulted in dogs roaming the sites, items being stolen and in some cases fears about personal security. Main complaints were from Long Leys, Burton Ridge, Greenbank Drive, Tritton Road, Boultham Glebe, Boultham Park, Simons Hill and Sincil Bank, South Common and Canwick Hill.

Notwithstanding the comments from the North Lincoln Horticultural Society, 71% of respondents are very satisfied or satisfied with their water supply. There appear to be problems with some people using too much water, leaving those at the extremities of the supply with low pressure and complaints from some holders of half plots that they pay the same for water as for a full plot. Although the number of responses was small from those sites where this appeared to be an issue, the main difficulties appear to be at Simon's Hill.

Most people are happy with their drainage and any problems on sites appear to be localised. Again satisfaction with parking is very dependent on the particular site in question, although this appears to be an issue with some at Wragby Road.

The survey went on to ask which facilities allotment holders felt were essential, desirable or not necessary (**Figure 4.2**). This shows a very clear endorsement of the need for a good water supply and secure boundaries. To a lesser extent drainage is felt to be more essential than desirable.

Facilities which are felt to be desirable (or to a lesser extent essential), are parking, facilities for disabled people, rubbish collection and a notice board. In the case of rubbish collection many people said they would like a skip every so often. Some responses on facilities for disabled people were coloured by a belief that disabled people could not cope with an allotment. This was despite the fact that 13% of respondents described themselves as disabled.

Figure 4.2 Value attached to facilities

Which facilities do you consider:	Essential %	Desirable %	Not necessary %
Water supply	98	2	
Secure boundaries	75	23	2
Good drainage	52	45	3
Lighting	3	28	69
Toilets	14	45	41
Communal shed	4	35	61
Rubbish collection	23	54	23
Parking	41	46	13
Notice board	17	56	27
Facilities for disabled people	22	60	18

The picture on the need for toilets was more mixed, although with more considering them desirable/essential than not necessary. Certainly the view was expressed by some that the need for these was increasing as more women took up allotment holding.

Those facilities felt by most respondents not to be necessary were lighting and communal sheds. In the case of communal sheds this to some extent depended on the size of the site, some people commenting that if the shed were too far away from their plot they would not wish to use it for storage of tools.

Amounts that people paid for an allotment varied from a little more than £10 for a half plot to £108 for several plots. Most paid around £35-£45 per year. Just under half of tenants received a 50% discount, either because they were a pensioner or unemployed (there are no discounts on the water charge). When asked if they were prepared to pay more for their allotment, 57% said yes. Amounts however varied widely from an additional £5 to an increase of £180 - generally in line with respondent's present level of rent. Sometimes, perceived poor maintenance influenced the responses of those who didn't want to pay more.

79% of respondents however stated they were prepared to carry out work or maintenance if the Council supplied them with materials. Others were willing but felt they were too old. There was one query about insurance. 59% of respondents were happy for their site to be self managed if there was somebody prepared to take it on. Some were keen however that this should be a properly constituted arrangement to prevent abuse.

75% of respondents felt there should be more provision for half size plots, although some respondents with half size plots stated that they had had difficulty in accessing their plot when it was situated behind another.

A resounding 83% of respondents stated that discounts for having multiple plots (10% for 6-10 allotments and 20% for 11 plus allotments) should not continue. This is no doubt a throw back to the time when it was difficult to let allotments, but many comments expressed concern about this arrangement - especially where there was a waiting list. (Attendees to the workshops felt that one or at the maximum, two plots was all that was needed for a family and any more that this would be used for commercial purposes).

When asked if they were satisfied with the way that allotments were managed by the Council, 10% said they were very satisfied, 58% said they were satisfied and 32% said they were dissatisfied. This is

therefore a largely positive endorsement of most of what the Council is doing and serves to temper some of the adverse comments made at several of the workshops.

Two issues however cropped up in the comments columns from practically every site:

- Vacant plots left idle for too long before being re-let.
- Poor communication with the Council, especially as they never see anyone visiting the sites; and linked to this
- Slow response to complaints about maintenance.

(The latter may reflect a lack of resources to remedy complaints). Comments on maintenance included repairs needed to roads and fencing/gates, leaking water pipes, need for better marking out of plots, poor ground, need to cut back trees, drainage, insufficient grass cutting by contractors, rodents and knotweed.

Other suggestions for improvements included - a delivery of compost/mould/manure/wood chip every so often, information on hire of a rotivator, the need for a play area for children, a desire by someone to keep geese and turkeys and a request for a “bench or two”.

There were also some ideas for better communication including site monitors, suggestions boxes and provision for face to face meetings with Council Officers (accepting the Council already has regular meetings with NLHS). Suggestions for new sites are included in **Appendix C**. In addition to these many allotment holders thought that new housing should provide allotments as part of their development.

4.6 Summary

The message from the Citizens’ Panel is that:

- There is some suppressed demand for allotments, though the level of positive response from those wishing to rent an allotment (30%) is probably in reality exaggerated; and
- Most people are aware of how to obtain an allotment.

The 2007 and 2012 surveys indicate that:

- The trends identified in the 2007 survey have continued with an increase in the proportion of female allotment holders from 33% to 38%. However the age distribution is still very much biased towards older age groups with two thirds over 55. 13% of allotment holders describe themselves as disabled;
- Nearly two thirds of respondents have rented their allotment for less than five years, indicating the recent upsurge of interest in allotment growing;
- In nearly 80% of cases the allotment has been in poor condition when taken over;
- Ideal travel times to allotments are no more than twenty minutes by walking or car, with two thirds taking less than ten minutes;
- The picture on condition of allotments is patchy with half or just under half of respondents very satisfied or satisfied with maintenance of paths and boundaries, security, drainage and parking. Even more (71%) are satisfied with their water supply. However many sites also have maintenance issues;
- Essential facilities are felt to be a good water supply, secure boundaries and to a lesser extent good drainage. Facilities which are felt to be desirable are parking, facilities for disabled people, rubbish collection and a notice board. Views on the need for toilets are more mixed although with more considering them essential/desirable than not necessary;
- 68% of respondents said they were very satisfied or satisfied with management by the Council. Key issues however are the time it takes to let vacant plots and ongoing communication, especially response times to effect requests for maintenance;

- Most allotment holders think that discounts for pensioners and unemployed people should continue but do not believe that there should be discounts for multiple plots;
- 57% of allotment holders are prepared to pay more rent. Amounts suggested vary widely however according to what they already pay;
- 79% of respondents stated they were prepared to carry out work or maintenance if the Council supplies them with materials (accepting that there may be insurance and other difficulties with allowing this to happen); and
- 59% of respondents were happy for their site to be self managed if there was somebody prepared to take it on.

5. Analysis of sites

5.1 Introduction

The sites are summarised below and there is a detailed description of the factors and standards which should be found on allotments in **Appendix D Design Guidance**. **Appendix G** provides a chart with the scoring given to each site. From the outset it should be noted that it can be immediately seen if an allotment is of a high quality - it will be visually pleasing with some attractive local features visible from within the site, the plots will be well maintained and cultivated throughout, there will be a hierarchy of paths which are surfaced in the appropriate materials to permit pedestrian and occasional vehicular traffic, the structures will be of an appropriate size and used solely to store tools and materials, the perimeter will be suitably lined with a security fence and soft planting where appropriate and there will be water taps located throughout the site.

The views of allotment holders regarding each of their sites have been added to the findings recorded from the audit to provide a more complete picture, particularly as to those features which allotment holders regard as essential or desirable (and conversely not necessary). To these have been added the views of the Council's Community Service. The audit looks at what is required to upgrade each site and does not take into account the possibility of any sites or parts of sites being found to be surplus to requirements (this is looked at in later chapters).

It should be noted that a considerable sum was recently spent by the Council on removing loose asbestos from sites. Further work is being planned to manage its removal from fences and sheds, so this report makes no further comment on this issue.

5.2 Northern sites

5.2.1 Long Leys

Area: 8.93ha

Number of lettable plots: 237

Number vacant: 15

This is a very large allotment site; although generally well used, it is poorly maintained in parts and in need of an improved layout. The plots which are partially/not cultivated detract from the aesthetic qualities of the overall site and some of the structures and security fencing within the site are unsightly. The timber gate to the north is well maintained; however the more southerly entrance needs improvement. The site is bordered by the backs of residents' gardens, tree lined scrub and a hedgerow along Long Leys Road which is largely of a good quality, but has gaps in places.

There is a wide access track running through the site but no designated parking – reconfiguring the layout could help to maximise use of the land for allotment purposes and provide facilities such as parking. The tree lined ditch, hedgerow and neighbouring field is a good landscape feature which in part offsets the noise from the busy A46 road nearby.

At the time of viewing the site, it did not appear very welcoming because of a substantial nearby derelict building (it is understood that this building has now been knocked down by its owners). The location of this site, near a hospital, could provide an opportunity for better links with patient groups.

Views of tenants

Tenants from the survey were particularly dissatisfied with the state of the access road. They were divided on the condition of the boundary fencing/hedging but had concerns that these were not secure. On the whole they were satisfied with provision of water, drainage and parking. When asked which other facilities were essential/desirable toilets, rubbish collection and provision for disabled people scored most highly.

Key recommendations are:

- The main access road is in need of repair – approx. 560 linear metres at a width of 3m;
- A security fence needs to be constructed along the eastern boundary of the allotment which borders the road – approx. 450m length of fencing is required;
- Entrance gates at the two current locations need to be re-provided and connect to the proposed security fence;
- The Council should investigate whether some of the structures should be cleared – the old BT van, for example;
- Car parking areas could be introduced at several points within this very large site – it is estimated that these will be approx. 200m² each with two to three areas constructed at strategic points;
- It may be possible to develop links with the nearby hospital for a patient group to take over an allotment.

5.2.2 Burton Ridge

Area: 0.59ha

Number of lettable plots: 30

Number vacant: 3

This is a picturesque allotment site on a steep slope with spectacular views over the ridge. The plots back onto people's gardens and are, in part, well used in the area next to the mown grass footpath. There is an area of scrub with birch trees further down the slope and it is towards this area where the plots are less well managed – it is uncertain where the actual boundaries for the plots are. It is suggested that this area of scrub could be better managed for biodiversity value.

There are water taps in various locations across the site, a couple of sheds (which is perhaps the correct number on a site this size) and a *Prunus sp.* tree on plot 37 which is popular with birds. This allotment feels safe due to the open views and very close proximity to people's back gardens, which all have gates leading onto the site. However there is an easily scaleable wooden gate at the entrance and boundary walls of the adjacent properties are low, which means that this boundary provides little security. This, plus the ill defined northern boundary possibly accounts for complaints from tenants that people often use the site as public open space. There is no designated parking area, although parking on Burton Road allows satisfactory access.

Views of tenants

The main complaint of tenants was the insecure access which means that people use the site for walking dogs and spread litter. There were also comments about the ill-defined nature of the wildlife area and the need to mark out plots more clearly. When asked which other facilities were essential/desirable toilets and provision for disabled people scored most highly.

Key recommendations are:

- Provide a lockable suitable barrier gate in a suitable location at the main entrance to ensure that the general public cannot access the site;
- Provide security fencing adjacent to the pathside; and
- Define the lower boundary to the site and manage wildlife value of scrub area beyond this.

5.2.3 Yarborough Crescent

Area: 2.31ha (2.01ha being prepared)

Number of lettable plots: 117

Number vacant: 6

This is a large allotment site which is being extended to the east where ground preparation, installation of water taps and the marking out of plots is currently taking place. The site is well secured by metal gates at all three entrances with associated fencing and the rest of the site borders onto neighbouring back gardens. Some of these contain overhanging trees such as beech, sloe, field maple and sycamore. There are taps located across the site and a notice board next to the Burton Road entrance. The allotment feels quite safe and in some places is relatively peaceful.

The plots and structures vary in quality – a little better management and growing of produce would enhance the site's aesthetic qualities. Improvements could also be made to the central track which is muddy throughout. Car parking may be an issue.

Views of tenants

Yarborough tenants were on the whole satisfied with their conditions (water supply, security, drainage and parking). Most concern was about maintenance of paths. There were occasional comments about security, water pressure and adjacent properties taking water. When asked which other facilities were essential/desirable toilets, rubbish collection and provision for disabled people scored most highly.

Key recommendations are:

- Better maintenance of paths and tracks is required.

5.2.4 Clarence Street A

Area: 1.53ha

Number of lettable plots: 37

Number vacant: 2

This is a well managed and adequately maintained site with a suitable entrance and area of hard standing for car parking. The NLHS store provides a good focus and enhances the feeling of security. There are potted plants at the entrance and the natural security, gained from being overlooked by housing, are key positive aspects. Scattered trees and back garden fences are the main border feature and there are many birds on the site. The plots are largely well maintained but could be improved with more involvement from tenants. One major improvement to be made is the central path which is poorly drained and muddy in places. Some of the plots have been halved to provide more manageable sized spaces.

Views of tenants

Tenants are largely satisfied with their conditions. When asked which other facilities were essential/desirable toilets, rubbish collection and provision for disabled people scored most highly.

Key recommendations are:

- Improve the central path – it is currently draining poorly – approx. 195 linear metres to be maintained to a minimum of 3m width with a one metre section of grass in the middle to create a track as seen on existing allotments: the total area is therefore 390m².

5.2.5 Clarence Street B

Area: 1.53ha

Number of lettable plots: 45

Number vacant: 3

This is a well kept and inviting site with good car parking space, access set away from the road and a good quality security entrance gate. There are spectacular views of Lincoln Cathedral and the plots, by and large, are well used and maintained. Some of the huts are in better condition than others but there are no inappropriate structures here or internal fences, which results in the feeling that this is an open and safe allotment site.

There is evidence of composting; also some fruit trees on plot 88B which has encouraged birds and wildlife. All plots seem to be used apart from one space between plots 88 and 88B. There is a notice board by the entrance which could be enhanced.

Views of tenants

Tenants are largely satisfied with all of their conditions. When asked which other facilities were essential/desirable, toilets, rubbish collection and provision for disabled people scored most highly. There was one comment that the maintenance of the gate/lock was unsatisfactory.

Key recommendations are:

- Overhaul lock;
- Notice board could be improved; and
- Replace perimeter fencing.

5.2.6 Ermine

Area 0.92ha

Number of plots: 21

Number vacant: 20

The plots on this allotment site do not appear to be being used (although there is one tenant). It is understood that tenancy of this site has not been encouraged as the future of this site has been unclear. This site does have potential but there is a lot of work to be done to get it to the required standard. A proper access track and parking area must be considered and the boundary which is comprised of a hawthorn hedge, wooden gates and a fence needs to be repaired and enhanced. There is also a fair amount of litter on site, although no evidence of fly tipping. If it is agreed that this site is required it would need to be laid out anew (see plan in **Appendix D**).

Views of tenants

No adverse comments from the one tenant.

Key recommendations are:

- If it is agreed that if this site is required it needs to be reconstructed with a new layout, access track, and boundary repair (fence and hedge), with an area of hard-standing for parking. The water supply would also need to be investigated.

5.2.7 Wragby Road

Area: 1.86ha

Number of lettable plots: 42

Number vacant: 1

This is an attractive allotment site in parts and has an enviable reputation as a secure and picturesque site. The western beech lined boundary and the beech hedge towards the south -west corner, as well the views out towards Lincoln Cathedral, make it a very attractive setting. The majority of the plots are being well cultivated and there are some unique features, such as crates being used for low boundary fences and espalier trees being grown on Plot 39.

The site itself has been well laid out and although some works are required to people's garden fences along the northern boundary, it is generally in good condition. Access arrangements to the site are not as straightforward as other allotments, however. From speaking to people at other sites, this works well in terms of security. Two (potentially locked) gates divide the site from the general public. Some additional lighting and better use made of the notice board are also options for improving this allotment. There is open space to the east designated as public open space, although it does not appear to be being used as such.

Views of tenants

Tenants were generally happy with their conditions but there was some dissatisfaction with water supply and parking arrangements. Other facilities felt to be essential/desirable were rubbish collection and facilities for disabled people. A play area for children was a suggestion by one respondent and vermin appear to be a problem.

Key recommendations are:

- Investigate water supply; and
- Access track requires some repair.

5.3 Southern sites

5.3.1 Greenbank Drive

Area: 0.44ha

Number of plots: 14

Number vacant: 0

This is a good quality allotment site, but will need to have improvements made to the entrance and perimeter fence if it is to remain successful. Some plots at the time of visiting the site were not in use. A

water supply is centrally located and people have begun preparing their plots with varying levels of success. Access is from a narrow street which cannot afford much additional parking, so a proper entrance with gates set back from the pavement and a small car parking area around plot 1 could be created. There is some scrub by the entrance which could be cleared to facilitate the new entrance.

There is some reasonable quality, high perimeter fencing along plots 5-8 and 10-13 but the fence on the side facing the playground needs replacing. A more appropriate pathway should be created for pedestrian access using some hard standing which would assist with access for disabled people.

Views of tenants

Tenants from the survey were dissatisfied with maintenance of paths and tracks, maintenance of hedges and security. There were requests for a new fence and lockable gate. There was some dissatisfaction with parking. Other facilities felt to be essential/desirable were rubbish collection and provision for disabled people. There were several complaints about the quality of the land, which has remnants of building work within it.

Key recommendations are:

- The entrance is currently an opening between scrub and a security fence – a formal entrance with gates and signage needs to be constructed. The gates would need to have fencing either side to ensure the site is secure – this is a total width of 20m approx;
- The perimeter fence along the eastern side of the site needs to be improved – 100m approx;
- An area of hard standing for a car parking area is required – 200m² approx; and
- A more suitable central pathway needs to be created – this would be approx. 75m in length and 3m in width with a one metre section of grass in the middle to create a track (as seen on other allotments). The total area is therefore 150m².

5.3.2 Hykeham Road

Area: 4.5ha

Number of lettable plots: 101

Number vacant: 1

This is a successful allotment site, well located behind a residential housing area and surrounded by trees on some of the boundaries. The majority of the plots seem well maintained and the access arrangements and internal security measures appear to be adequate. A good level of production can be seen on many of the plots. There are some large structures which detract from the visual amenity of the site and it is recommended that this issue be addressed by the Council.

A private car repair garage (not part of the allotment site) is operating adjacent to Plot 7, and whilst this is not in keeping with the site's aesthetics it does provide a regular presence on site.

Views of tenants

Tenants were generally happy with their conditions but there was some dissatisfaction with maintenance of paths and tracks. Other facilities felt to be desirable were toilets and provision for disabled people. There were individual comments about security, overshadowing from trees, need for more taps and poor drainage.

Key recommendations are:

- The main access track is in need of repair in some areas - allow for approximately 100m²;

5.3.3 Tritton Road

Area: 0.25ha
Number of plots: 12
Number vacant: 0

This allotment is set within a very urban environment and there is not much relief from the surrounding noise. However from speaking to people on site there is a good community spirit here and people are enthusiastic about their plots. The main issue is the Tritton Road boundary which needs to be consolidated by replacing the fence and possibly introducing some shrub planting beneath the trees. There is an opportunity to add planting along the fence adjacent to the railway depending on maintenance guidance and offset regulations. The plots seem to be well used; however there is an issue with vandalism (it is not difficult to jump over the gate or climb through the fence). Improved boundary fences are recommended for this location.

Views of tenants

The main dissatisfaction was with the state of boundaries and linked to this security. Desirable features were rubbish collection. There was one request for a secure store.

Key recommendations are:

- Shrub planting and a new security fence is required along the Tritton Road boundary of this allotment – 46 linear metres approx;
- Some planting should be introduced along the boundary which borders the railway line – this will be approx. 70m²; and
- There should be higher boundary treatment along the northern edge of the site to replace the fence which is too low – this is approx. 70 linear metres.

5.3.4 Boultham Glebe

Area: 7.21ha
Number of lettable plots: 138
Number vacant: 4

In general, this allotment site is functioning well with some minor issues. There is a difference in visual character relative to the plot location - the areas close to the entrance look far better maintained than some of the plots further away. Some large structures have been built which are unsightly and not in keeping with the general allotment aesthetic. Although the main path has potholes, which should be repaired, it is a good width and generally of a good standard, facilitating potential access for disabled people.

There is a good mixture of planting and vegetable production on this land and some of the plots have been halved – a strategy which could perhaps be used across more of the site. The water supply is adequate. There are CCTV warning signs up, to account for the mobile camera patrols undertaken by the Council's Urban Ranger service. There are some fenced plots such that there are parts of the site which do not feel so welcoming. It is recommended that the plots which aren't being managed correctly are divided and the large structures on site are investigated by the Council as to their suitability.

Views of tenants

Tenants were on the whole satisfied with the water supply, drainage and parking. There was dissatisfaction with the maintenance of the track and many individual comments about this. They were also

dissatisfied with the state of boundaries and linked to this security. Desirable facilities were rubbish collection and provision for disabled people.

Key recommendations are:

- The central path has potholes and is in need of repair or resurfacing at certain points – the approx. length of this path is 455m. The path must be maintained to a minimum width of 3m – the total area therefore is 1365m²;
- Some of the larger structures are not in keeping with the overall character of the site and should be investigated by the Council;
- Other paths which provide access (some of which are in between plots) need to be a minimum of 1.4m in width and maintained to a higher standard either by the plot holders or the Council; and
- The boundary to this site is not secure. There is a ditch on one side and some of the plots back onto the fences of neighbouring houses. There are some issues in erecting a suitable fence given the context, however further investigation should be made and a suitable perimeter fence constructed – allow for 565 linear metres along the exposed southern and eastern edges.

5.3.5 Boutham Park

Area: 4.53ha

Number of lettable plots: 108

Number vacant: 7

This allotment site seems to be functioning well and has a good layout with adequate security gates. The visual character is varied depending on the measures taken by tenants to secure their plots. Some have developed significantly large security fencing whilst others have laid down simple markers.

Tree and shrubs surround the perimeter. Willow trees with brambles, hornbeam and oak and the river corridor with an avenue of poplar trees, provide an interesting landscape. The plots are being cultivated for a variety of purposes in addition to vegetables. Chickens are being kept and some tenants are using their plots partially as leisure gardens.

A key issue with the boundaries is that the site shares an open border with the riverside cycle way and therefore access is unrestricted. There are some issues in erecting a fence given this context - however further investigation should be made and a suitable perimeter fence constructed.

Views of tenants

Whereas tenants were in the main satisfied with their water supply, drainage and parking, dissatisfaction was expressed about the maintenance of paths and tracks with many individual comments about this. The boundary to this site is not secure and some tenants have reported serious incidents involving theft and trespass. Rubbish collection was felt to be desirable as were facilities for disabled people. Views were divided as to whether toilets were desirable. There were also some individual comments regarding overshadowing trees, rodents and knotweed, and one request for a communal shed.

Key recommendations are:

- The path has potholes and is in need of repair or resurfacing at certain points – allow for 100m²; and
- Allow for 356 linear metres of security fence along the southern and eastern edges which border onto the cycle path.

5.3.6 Simon's Hill

Area: 3.72ha

Number of lettable plots: 84

Number vacant: 47

This is a large allotment site which unfortunately has been under-utilised in recent years and is largely abandoned. It urgently needs some better security measures in order to fulfil its potential and attract more plot holders.

It is suggested that the first step would be to re-establish the plot boundaries into more manageable spaces by creating a new layout for the plots which are not being used. This would, in addition to increasing usage of land, maximise views across the plots and enhance safety. The boundary treatment here is similar to many other sites in that the site backs onto people's back gardens and is adjacent to publicly accessible land. However, there is fly tipping and theft is a significant problem. It is suggested that getting the local people more involved with the site could help to tackle some of these social issues.

Visually the site is not inviting with those plots which are tended often separately fenced. With more people using the site, the level of individual security around their plots could be reduced and this would create a more welcoming environment. The gate to the north of the site needs repairing, the eastern boundary (next to the footpath) needs a landscape management strategy and improvements to the water supply are required.

From speaking to local people it seems that a significant level of funding for improvements is needed as soon as possible - small interventions will not make the difference required.

Views of tenants

Dissatisfaction was expressed with maintenance of boundaries, security (even a warden's house was suggested) and provision of water – including several comments about the need for additional watering points. Other desirable features were rubbish collection and facilities for disabled people.

Key recommendations are:

- Control of inappropriate structures;
- More effective security fencing is required for this site – the southern boundary is approx. 120m, the eastern boundary approx. 425m, northern boundary is approx. 115m and the western boundary - which has issues with rubbish being thrown over their fence, is approx. 315m in length;
- CCTV and/or specific site lighting could assist with security;
- The water supply needs to be improved – more taps should be introduced and pipework (approx. 400m in length);
- Fly-tipping surveillance is required;
- Once the site is more secure, individual plot holders should be encouraged to lower or preferably remove their security fences;
- The gate to the northern entrance needs repairing;
- A landscape management strategy along river corridor to the east of the site should be introduced – the area to be planted and managed is approximately 850m²;
- The central pathway needs to be repaired – this path is approx. 500m in length and needs to be maintained to a width of 3m with a one metre section of grass in the middle to create a track, as seen on other allotments. The total area is therefore approx. 1000m²; and
- Car parking areas need to be introduced at several points within the site – it is estimated that these will be approx. 200m² each and two to three areas should be constructed at strategic points.

5.3.7 St Botolph's Crescent

Area: 0.21ha

Number of lettable plots: 15

Number vacant: 3

This site has potential to become a visually attractive focal point within a dense area of housing. Improvements need to be made to the boundary fence and the plots need to be better utilised. A notice board could be introduced and the adequacy of the water supply should be investigated further.

Views of tenants

Here, very few replies were received to get a good picture of any issues. Those who did reply were dissatisfied with the condition of paths, tracks, boundary fence and provision of water. A communal shed and rubbish collection were marginally felt to be desirable. There were comments about marking out of boundaries and use of chemicals.

Key recommendations are:

- The boundary fence needs to be improved – this could be a medium-height wooden fence to match the existing gates – the fence is approx. 100m in length;
- The site will require a water supply extension to cover approximately 85m in length.

5.3.8 Sincil Bank

Area: 0.32ha

Number of lettable plots: 16

Number vacant: 0

This is a visually attractive secluded site, in a good location by the river walk, which feels safe due to the good quality boundaries, localised topography and the fact that it is overlooked by a school and houses. Some of the plots are in better condition than others and a couple appear to be unmanaged.

This site has great potential to be enhanced ecologically with a landscape strategy for the western boundary. The site could benefit from a notice board. Parking could be a problem depending on level of usage. The main issue is ensuring that those who rent a plot are using it in its entirety; it might be worth dividing a couple of the plots to more manageable sizes.

Views of tenants

Tenants were largely satisfied with the condition of their site, although they were dissatisfied with maintenance of boundaries and security. Several comments included a request for a new gate and fence “which cannot be climbed over”. A notice board was deemed to be essential and rubbish collection and communal shed marginally desirable.

Key recommendations are:

- A landscape strategy should be implemented for the western boundary – this will cover approx. 180m² and consist of new planting and managing existing landscape features;
- A new, more secure, fence and gate is required;
- The possibility of some plots being halved should be investigated; and
- Improvements should be made to the access ramp (which is privately owned) with the agreement of the owner – approx. 15m².

5.3.9 Kingsway

Area: 0.22ha

Number of lettable plots: 9

Number vacant: 0

This appears to be a very effectively used and well maintained allotment – the plots are very neatly laid out and the configuration with sheds and structures along one boundary works well. There are a few minor issues with parking and access for disabled people but this cannot be helped given the location of the site. A notice board would be of benefit at this site. The neighbouring school provides a good opportunity to foster relationships between the tenants and wider local community. Some of the sheds and structures could be better maintained or replaced. There are some climbing plants along the west and south boundaries and this could be further enhanced.

Views of tenants

There was only one response from Kingsway. The respondent was mainly happy with conditions. Toilets, rubbish collection and parking were felt to be useful additions.

Key recommendations are:

- No major intervention is required for the present.

5.3.10 South Common

Area: 0.48ha

Number of lettable plots: 14

Number vacant: 2

This site is one of the two which are privately owned. This allotment site has a unique setting looking out across the Common. It is understood that there are three plots within the site occupied by the remains from the ancient leper hospital. There are longstanding issues relating to vandalism, which could be easily resolved through better management and a proper security fence being erected. Some of the individual plots have been fenced and some of the plots have been neglected leading to a loss in visual quality. It is recommended that the Council should ensure tenants are utilising their land to a basic standard. There is potential to enhance the biodiversity value along the western boundary beside the former railway cutting. Some tenants are clearly enthusiastic about this site and are using their plots well. However, this allotment needs some significant funding to enhance security and attract tenants.

Views of tenants

There were only three responses. However these all expressed great dissatisfaction with maintenance of boundaries and security. Other desirable features were a communal shed and rubbish collection.

Key recommendations are:

- A suitable perimeter fence and security gate should be constructed – this will be approx. 335m in length;
- Provide a basic access path 1.4m width and approx. 200m in length through the central area of the allotment; and
- Enhance the planting to the south and east (approx. 360m²) and along the river corridor to the west (approx. 220m²).

5.3.11 Canwick Hill

Area: 2.32ha

Number of lettable plots: 51

Number vacant: 0

This allotment, also privately owned and situated to the south-east of Lincoln, has a much more isolated feel to it compared to many of the other allotments, which have an urban setting surrounded by housing. The site itself is adequately configured with wide tracks providing suitable access to the majority of the plots and there is an area for car parking. The plots in general are well maintained, although some security fences around individual plots detract from the visual quality of the site.

The beech trees to the north eastern boundary and views across arable farmland to the west are particularly attractive landscape features and enhance this site's unique setting. The hedge which runs along the perimeter has gaps and should be improved. A proper entrance with a gate and relevant signage should be implemented. This could be enhanced by some form of lighting either at the entrance or around the car park area. Depending on the number of people walking to this site, there should also be improvements made to the pedestrian access. This rather isolated location could perhaps benefit from some CCTV but this depends on the current level of vandalism – no tenants were on site for comment.

Views of tenants

Tenants were in the main satisfied with their water supply, drainage and parking. Dissatisfaction was expressed about condition of tracks and security. It was stated that there is an issue with vans coming onto the site once every few months and stealing/vandalising sites. There is need for gates set back from the road. Features felt to be desirable were rubbish collection and facilities for disabled people. There were also comments about the state of plots and need for weed control.

Key recommendations are:

- Construct a suitable entrance with security gates and fence offset from the road – this area will be approximately 90m²;
- The tracks within this site are in need of improvement in certain areas – allow for 200m²; and
- Enhance perimeter hedge planting through new planting and maintaining the existing – approx. 480m².

5.4 Site specific improvement costs

Following the advice from the workshops, from individual questionnaires to current allotment holders and from the Council's Allotment Service, costed improvements have been separated out into those felt to be essential and those felt to be desirable. A list of more general necessary improvements such as signage and drainage has been included at the end. Also omitted have been comments about individual problems which it is assumed are part of ongoing maintenance. It should be emphasised that this provides only very general guidance on improvements needed, but gives a useful picture as to their extent. Further costings would need to be produced, were any of these to be implemented.

These are summarised in a table below and have been priced in accordance with the method detailed in **Appendix E**. They do not include site overheads, profit to the contractor or Value Added Tax.

Northern sites	Essential	Desirable	Total
Long Leys	Security Fence - £58,500 New Entrance Gates - £2,140 Make good and resurface access road - £12,600	Clearance of structures - £1,429 Toilet(s)x2 - £6,000 Introduce car parking area - £4,544	Essential: £73,240 Desirable: £11,973 Total: £85,213
Burton Ridge	New secure entrance gate - £2,100 Security fencing - £4,000 Water supply - £2,000	[None]	Essential: £8,100 Desirable: £0 Total: £8,100
Yarborough Crescent	Make good and resurface access track- £5,000	Toilet(s) - £3,000 Introduce car parking area - £4,544	Essential: £5,000 Desirable: £7,544 Total: £12,544
Clarence Street A	Improve path - £2,200	[None]	Essential: £2,200 Desirable: £0 Total: £2,200
Clarence Street B	Improve path - £2,200	Toilet(s) - £3,000 Replace fencing - £10,000	Essential: £2,200 Desirable: £13,000 Total: £15,200
Ermine	[Re-construct entire site]	[None]	Included in general costs below
Wragby Road	Improve path £3,200	Investigate/refurbish water supply £5,000	Essential: £3,200 Desirable: £5,000 Total: £8,200
Southern sites	Essential	Desirable	Total
Greenbank Drive	Entrance gate and fence - £3,150 Security fence - £13,000	Provide new central pathway - £3,408	Essential: £16,150 Desirable: £3,408 Total: £19,558
Hykeham Road	Fill and resurface track £750 Extend water supply £3,000	Toilets (x2) - £6,000	Essential: £3,750 Desirable: £6,000 Total: £9,750
Tritton Road	Shrub planting along Tritton Road - £6,493 Timber fence - £1,490	Security/shrub planting along the railway £5,000	Essential: £7,983 Desirable: £5,000 Total: £12,923

Boultham Glebe	Boundary treatment - £73,450 Fill and resurface central path £10,200	[None]	Essential - £83,650 Desirable: £0 Total £83,650
Boultham Park	Fill and resurface track - £5,000 Extend water supply - £3,000 Secure boundaries (security fence) - £46,280	[None]	Essential: £54,280 Desirable: £0 Total: £54,280
Simon's Hill	Landscape management for the eastern boundary - £31,759 Repair entrance gate (estimated) - £500 Security fence - £98,800 Water supply taps (20no.) - £7,160 Fill and resurface central pathway £4,360	Clearance of inappropriate structures (10 no.) - £1,429	Essential: £142,579 Desirable: £1,429 Total: £144,008
St Botolph's Crescent	Water supply (if required upon further inspection) 3 no - £1,074	Improve boundary fence (timber) - £3,239	Essential: £1,074 Desirable: £3,239 Total: £4,313
Sincil Bank	New fence and gate (allow for one 4m wide security gate) - £1,070	Improve access ramp - £341 Landscape strategy – £5,734	Essential: £1,070 Desirable: £6,075 Total: £7,145
Kingsway	[None]	[None]	Essential: £0 Desirable: £0 Total: £0
South Common	Perimeter Fence (Security) - £43,550 Security Gate - £1,070	Enhance boundary planting (half length of boundary) - £8,500	Essential: £44,620 Desirable: £8,500 Total: £53,120
Canwick Hill	Re-construct entrance - £2,045 Entrance gates - £1,070 Fill and resurface tracks - £1,500	Enhance perimeter hedging - £33,876	Essential: £4,615 Desirable: £33,876 Total: £38,491

These basic costs above for essential improvements total **£370,061**. To these should be added broad estimates provided by the Council for:

	£
■ Plot reinstatement (Ermine) to re-let	25,000
■ Tree works	5,000
■ Dyke clearance	20,000
■ Drainage	70,000
■ Signage	5,000
■ Extra taps	62,000
■ Barbed wire removal	5,000
■ Clearance of overgrown plots	<u>64,000</u>
	256,000

This gives a total for essential improvements to: **£709,711**. Adding a notional sum for overheads and contractor's profit this adds up to roughly **£815,000**. Plot reinstatement above is for Ermine site. Were this site to be sold off this would provide saving of £25,000 on the projected spend.

Desirable improvements could add a further **£105,044**, which allowing for overheads and profit gives approximately **£121,000**. At the workshops some of the allotment holders indicated that they could carry out some of the easier work themselves if supplied with materials. This could provide a small saving in some cases, but the difficulties of using volunteers in anything other than a formally structured way is noted.

There are a number of other possible capital costs to consider. Many responses for instance stated that facilities for disabled people were desirable. It would not be practical to provide facilities for disabled people on every site, but there should be further provision on a few sites, subject to demand. A possible **£10,000** should be allowed for this.

Many respondents were also equivocal about the need for toilets. Where most pronounced, this requirement has been included in the costing for individual sites, above. However, it is likely that as more women become involved in allotment holding, there will be an increasing demand for toilets. Were a composting toilet to be added to each of the other sites, this could cost a further **£54,000**.

Cycle shelters and storage were not present at any of the allotments. When the sites were surveyed, there was evidence of people using cycles to get to/from the allotments and the need for secure cycle storage should be investigated further.

Many allotment holders felt that rubbish collection would be desirable. It is considered that the Council should ideally include for the cost of an occasional skip to all sites. In addition the need for pest control was raised by allotment holders at various times. There is a requirement to control of vermin (rats and wasps) annually and to provide additional pest control on occasions. Both of these measures would result in an increase in revenue costs (addressed in later sections of this report).

5.5 Summary

From analysing the allotments through site visits, from speaking to people on site and the tenants' survey, it was found that, with one or two notable exceptions, allotment sites are in relatively good condition with only minor improvements required. Many of the plots are being well used; there is a good variety of produce being grown and poultry being kept. Some variation in the size and appearance of plots creates an

aesthetically pleasing site and some of the more successful sites were also using land to grow fruit trees which in turn enhances resident wildlife.

It is suggested that rules about appropriate development on allotment sites are enforced. On some sites there are large, unsightly structures which are not in-keeping with the allotment character. Where plot sizes are unmanageable, people should be offered and encouraged to use land which they can afford enough time to care for. This is already happening with the letting of half size plots.

Taking into account what allotment holders think, an estimate of costs of essential improvements is around **£815,000**. Desirable improvements including some facilities for disabled people would add another **£130,000**. There are also likely to be requests for items such as toilets in future.

In addition there is a need for increases in revenue spending, for rubbish collection and vermin control.

6. Demand

6.1 Current demand

6.1.1 Waiting list and availability

Table 2 Occupancy of allotments as at 1st November 2011

Sites	Owner	Total number of plots	Lettable plots	Unlettable plots	Other plots	Occupied	% Occupancy	Number of vacant plots	Requests for sites (some multiple)
Northern sites									
Long Leys	Council	238	237	1		222*	94	15	4
Burton Ridge	Council	30	30			27	90	3	3
Yarborough Crescent	Council	116	72		44**	66	92	6	1
Yarborough Road	Council	1	1			1	100	0	0
Clarence St A	Council	40	37	3		35	95	2	9
Clarence St B	Council	47	45	2		42	93	3	8
Ermine	Council	21				1	5	20	12
			21***						
Wragby Road	Council	43	42	1		41	98	1	11
							total	50	48
Southern sites									
Greenbank Drive	Council	14	14			14	100	0	1
Hykeham Road	Council	102	101	1		100	99	1	20
Tritton Road	Council	12	12			12	100	0	24
Boultham Glebe	Council	150	138	12		134	97	4	14
Boultham Park	Council	111	108	3		101	94	7	9
Simon's Hill	Council	97	84			37	44	47	2
				13****					
St Botolph's Crescent	Council	15	15			12	80	3	10
Sincil Bank	Council	16	16			16	100	0	38
Kingsway	Council	9	9			9	100	0	23
South Common	Private owner	17	14	3		12	86	2	15
Canwick Hill (North Kesteven)	Jesus College Oxford	74	51		23*****	51	100	0	8
							total	64	164
Total		1153	1047	39	67	933	89	114	212

* 37 plots at Long Leys are let to a farmer;

** 44 plots being reinstated as 66 plots at Yarborough Crescent

*** Ermine plots are not at present being let;

**** 13 plots at Simon's Hill were used for grazing and are in need of preparation before letting; and

***** 23 plots at Canwick Hill have been taken out of commission prior to possible transfer back to the owners.

The total area of allotment sites is 44.07ha comprising 1153 plots with circulation space. There are 1047 currently lettable plots. The number of plots, occupancy rates and potential allotment holders on the waiting list, broken down for each site as at November 1st 2011 is shown above.

The number of requests for sites shown in the table is an exaggeration of the numbers on the waiting list since several people have made requests for more than one site. In addition some have asked for more than one plot. The actual number of people on the waiting list is 114. Most of these want full size plots although some are willing to take half size plots. (It should be noted that this number is probably still an overestimate since allotment holders in the consultation exercise stated that plots were sometimes abandoned straightaway, when takers realised that the work involved was more than they had anticipated).

There are currently 114 vacant plots. In addition 44 former plots at Yarborough Crescent are to be reinstated as 66 plots. This means that there are 180 available or soon to be available plots for 114 takers which suggests that current demand can easily be satisfied – assuming people on the waiting list only get one plot each or in some cases half a plot. There are also 39 further currently unlettable plots which could be brought back into service, bringing the total of available or possible future plots to 219.

Notwithstanding this, the list also indicates a very clear mismatch between demand and plots available, with a waiting list on some sites, but available plots with no takers on other sites. In total there are 11 sites where demand outstrips availability, 5 sites (including Yarborough Crescent) are more or less in balance and 3 have available plots, but little or only a small demand.

Most popular sites are Sincil Bank (to the southeast) with 38 requests and no available plots. Other very popular sites with many takers and no vacant plots are Tritton Road (southeast), Kingsway (southeast) and Hykeham Road (the most southerly site). Apart from Hykeham Road all of these are very small sites. Less popular sites but also in demand are, South Common and St Botolph's Crescent (both small sites) and Boultham Glebe and Canwick Hill (both larger sites). These are all also in the south. In the north Clarence St A and B and Wragby Road (all sizeable sites) are also relatively popular.

The least popular site is Simons Hill in the southeast where there are 2 takers and 47 plots available (although it understood that some of these are now in the process of being let). In the north, at Long Leys (a very large site in the northwest) there are no takers for 16 vacant plots. Ermine is also unpopular but this may be because plots here are not currently being let. From this it can be concluded that popularity or otherwise does not relate to size of site.

6.1.2 Geographical distribution of current demand

Looked at on a geographical basis there are 48 requests for sites in the north and a supply of 116 vacant plots including the 66 being brought into service at Yarborough Crescent. In the south however there are 164 requests for sites but only 64 plots immediately available - most of these at Simon's Hill, which is highly unpopular. Although some of these represent multiple requests, the conclusion must be that while the north is well supplied with plots, more plots are needed in the south including an urgent need to address the reasons why the Simon's Hill site is so unpopular (outlined in Chapter 5).

This analysis does not take into account any allotment holders who might prefer plots in the other parts of the City, where there are currently no sites (looked at in the next chapter).

6.1.3 Current standards

Lincoln's population was estimated at 88,500 (2009) with an average household size of 2.09 persons (also 2009) giving 42,345 households. Current apparent demand, adding the number of let plots (933) to the

actual number on the waiting list (114) is 1047. Assuming the number of request for multiple plots matches the number of requests for half plots; this works out at roughly 25 plots per 1,000 households.

6.1.4 Effect of the distribution of sites on demand

Allotment sites are distributed across the northern and south eastern sections of the City including one site outside the city boundary near Canwick. There are few sites in the northeast of the City and none at all in the southwest.

32.9% of residents do not have access to a car. This is a higher percentage than county, regional and national averages. Therefore on these grounds alone it is suggested that sites should be reasonably close to where people live and if possible on a bus route. Even for those with cars, it is Council policy to reduce the number of car journeys, indicating that sites should be within easy walking distance of allotment holders. In these circumstances, also taking into account the views of allotment holders, it is suggested that this distance should ideally take 10 minutes to walk.

Account should also be taken of the location of areas of deprivation where it could be argued demand for allotments is likely to be highest on economic grounds. With the exception of the City centre, these will tend to be the denser residential areas of the district without gardens and where people are even less likely to own a car. The attached map (**figure 6.1**) shows the location of existing allotment sites in relation to those Super Output Areas (SOAs) which rank in the top 5% and top 10% of most deprived SOAs in the country (under the ODPM English Indices of Deprivation 2007). These fringe the northern boundary (part of Castle, Glebe and Minster wards) and north east of the City (Abbey and part of Park ward). There are also pockets of deprivation in the south (parts of Moorland and Park wards) and in the southwest in Birchwood ward.

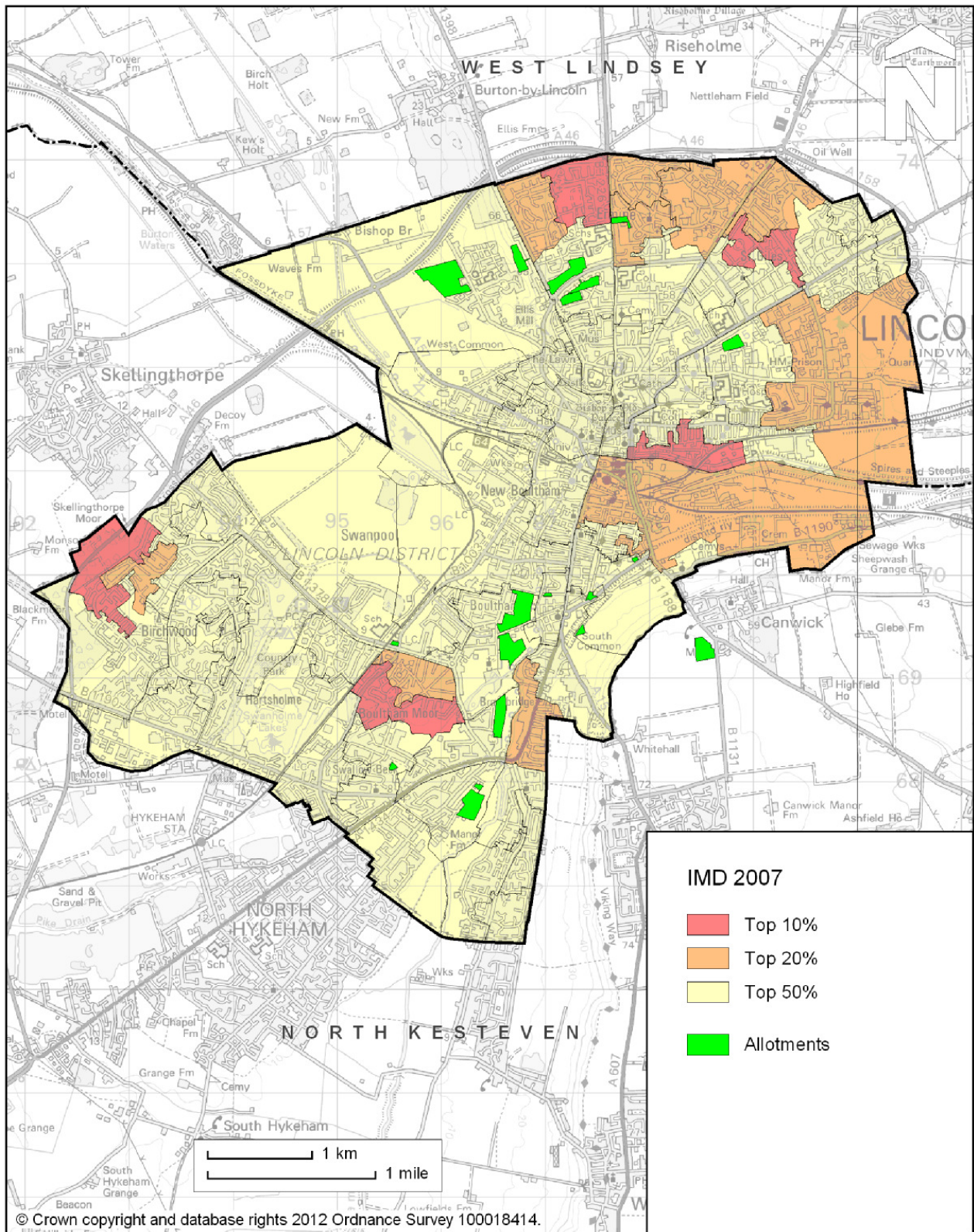
The current distribution of allotments therefore broadly follows or is close to the location of the most deprived neighbourhoods with the exception of the Birchwood ward in the southwest; Glebe ward in the northeast and the western part of Abbey ward in the east. There is even more reason therefore why there should be some allotment provision in future to the southwest and east/north east, particularly in or near the parts of these areas which have high levels of deprivation.

In terms of calculating latent or suppressed demand, very approximately these areas (Birchwood and Glebe wards and half of Abbey ward) represent a quarter of the overall population of Lincoln or roughly 9,500 households. The current level of car ownership is probably far lower in these areas than the norm, but using the average car ownership (33%) as a guide as to those households in these areas which would not consider taking an allotment because it is too far away and adopting the current standard of 25 allotments per 1,000 households, this suggests that there could be a suppressed demand for 78 or so additional allotments arising from the southwest and east/northeast. This would be split roughly equally between the two locations.

46% of Lincoln's population are under 44 and over half of these under 30. This is in stark contrast with the rest of the country which tends towards older age groups. Wards with a higher proportion of younger people are Birchwood, Glebe and Moorland, whereas more elderly people (the traditional age of allotment holders) are to be found in Boultham, Castle and Minster – all of which contain sites. However there are also older groups in western wards who are disadvantaged because of where they live and will benefit from a better distribution of sites.

The percentage of mixed race and BAME (black and minority ethnic) residents is 9.07% with the highest proportion being from the Asian communities. These tend to be concentrated in Boultham, Carholme, Park, Abbey and Glebe wards, the latter two wards being deficient in sites. Further sites in these areas will therefore be of benefit to these groups. The Equality Impact Assessment accompanying this report looks at these issues in greater detail.

Figure 7.1 Allotment sites related to areas of deprivation



Source: City of Lincoln Council

6.1.5 Other latent demand

The Council's allotments are not advertised but information received from the Citizens' Panel survey suggests that most people know how they should go about obtaining an allotment. Some of the allotment sites also have websites and there has also been a great deal of publicity nationally about allotments in recent years.

30% of respondents to the Citizens' Panel, who had never had an allotment, stated that if that they would like an allotment if the conditions were right. Experience suggests that when faced with the reality of tending an allotment much of this apparent interest might dwindle. However this is another indication of latent demand. In the light of this it would be prudent to make a further allowance to the waiting list for perhaps 20 plots.

Nationally there are an increasing number of community groups, schools and so on taking on allotments and there are a few groups who currently have an allotment in Lincoln. However although it is recommended that these avenues should be tapped in future, it is concluded that any unmet demand from these sources would not greatly affect the current waiting list figures.

6.1.6 Overall demand

Adding suppressed demand to let plots and the existing waiting list:

Let plots	933
Waiting list	114
Suppressed demand from southwest and east/northeast	78
Suppressed demand from Citizen's Panel	<u>20</u>
Total	<u>1145</u>

It can therefore be concluded that current overall demand including demand which is currently not being met equates to 27 plots per 1,000 households. This just matches the number of plots available overall if currently unlettable plots are brought back into commission - but of course they are in the wrong place. It should be noted that this current estimated overall demand in Lincoln is far higher than the NSALG recommendations of 20 plots per 1000 households.

6.2 Demand to 2031

6.2.1 Population growth

In October 2006 the Lincoln Policy Areas (LPA) partners (City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council, West Lindsey District Council, and Lincolnshire County Council) were awarded new growth point status. The place making strategy developed by the same authorities identifies three sustainable urban extensions with over 19,800 new homes in the next 20 years:

- To the west of Lincoln including land in Lincoln and North Kesteven;
- To the northeast of Lincoln including land in Lincoln and West Lindsey; and
- To the southeast of Lincoln outside the City boundary in North Kesteven District.

The population of Lincoln itself is set to grow from an estimated 88,500 in 2009 to 104,100 by 2031. This is at the rate of 525 houses per year from 2009/10 to 2015/15 and 369 houses per year thereafter or 8,834 households in total. Based on dwelling led projections Lincoln's population could be even higher at 132,000 (an increase of 21,000 households). If estimated current demand for plots was to remain constant at 27 plots per 1,000 households and assuming current overall demand more or less matches the present

supply, this would suggest that between 240 and 560 new plots (9.2ha to 21.4ha) will be required by 2031 - depending on levels of growth. More of these will be required in the early years, if housing forecasts are correct.

If these are to be provided within Lincoln's boundaries they should be located to the west of northeast i.e. near those areas which are currently without allotments and adjacent to areas of new Lincoln housing. It should be also be remembered that plots are also currently needed in the south of the City - although new development in this vicinity will be south of the City boundary.

6.2.2 Trends

The history of Lincoln's allotments outlined in Chapter 2 which very much mirrors trends elsewhere, suggests that the current revival of interest may be short lived once the present recession is over (estimated to be about ten years). Whereas it is very difficult under the circumstances to cast forward twenty years there are indications of other considerations at play in the future which may prolong this interest:

- Food security is going to become increasingly important. At present Britain imports 60% of its food and there is pressure elsewhere in the world for increasing food supplies as populations grow. Despite more intensive farming methods supplies are also affected by climate change. Moreover Britain's current population is also set to rise;
- Climate change and the need for more sustainable transport suggests that the present interest in locally sourced high quality food will continue to rise especially where this is free; and
- The number of single and dual person households is set to increase with more people living in flats. Population density in Lincoln was 24.76 persons per ha in 2007 compared with 24 persons per ha in 2001, indicating a gradual increase in line with many other cities.

In light of this it is suggested that estimates could be 10% adrift in either direction and need should be regularly monitored.

6.3 Summary

The current situation therefore is:

- There are sufficient plots to satisfy the current waiting list overall. However there is a mismatch between available sites and demand for these;
- Allotments tend to be clustered in the north of the City and towards the southeast. There are unpopular sites in the north and south, but while there is a surfeit of plots generally in the north, more plots are needed in the south, including an urgent need to address the reasons why the Simons Hill site is so unpopular;
- There are no sites in the southwest at all and few near the northeast/eastern fringes of the City, where in both cases some of the more deprived areas are located. Ideally there should be some provision in future in these locations;
- Suppressed demand in these areas could add a further 78 allotments to the waiting list, split evenly between the two areas. A further allowance of 20 plots should be made for suppressed demand generally, giving a total of 1145 plots. This still matched current availability, were all current lettable and unlettable plots to be brought into use - but of course these are not in the right place; and
- This equates to 27 plots per 1,000 households. It should be noted that this current estimated overall demand in Lincoln is far higher than the NSALG recommendations of 20 plots per 1000

In future:

- If estimated current demand for plots was to remain constant at 27 plots per 1,000 households between 240 and 560 new plots or (9.2ha to 21.4ha) will be required by 2031, depending on levels of growth and allowing for full occupation of current sites;
- In addition to those presently needed in the south, these will be needed in areas scheduled for growth to the west and northeast of Lincoln ie near areas which are currently lacking provision; and
- Past trends suggest that the present demand might diminish once the current recession is over. However there are a number of factors - such as growing concerns about food security, climate change and demography which indicate that demand for plots might continue to grow. In light of this it is suggested that estimates could be 10% adrift in either direction and should be regularly monitored.

7. Management arrangements

7.1 Existing management arrangements

7.1.1 Staffing

At present there are no staff with sole responsibility for running allotments in the City (despite the recommendations from the 2007 report that there should be a full time allotments officer). Within the larger Community Services section, one person works solely on the allotments letting service for 50% of her time. Responsibility for maintenance (managed via an external contractor) and capital spend lies with others, although the allotments service has a “wish list” of repairs and basic renewal spend that it would like to see implemented, which is submitted annually for consideration by the Council along with other capital spend.

7.1.2 The letting and monitoring process

The present system is very much based on local knowledge. Interested people phone in, call in to the office or apply on line. The Council Allotments Letting Officer (ALO) advises of vacancies and puts names on a waiting list. It is a first come, first served system. The applicant has to confirm if they wish to go on the waiting list and then the ALO sends them plot lists with a plan. Evidence has to be provided of status, but the system largely relies on trust.

Lots are let throughout the year but usually fall vacant in the autumn when the person at the top of the waiting list for that particular site is invited to apply for a plot. If the response is positive, a tenancy agreement is sent out to the applicant and once the paperwork is returned with payment, the new tenant is sent a key. Tenancy agreements are standardised. Overgrown plots are sometimes rotivated by the Council. If a group or individual takes over a plot in very poor condition, then a waiver or rent free period might be given. Larger plots are now often re-let as half plots.

The Waiting List is reviewed each year and if those waiting do not respond they are taken off the list. The view is that vacancy rates are dropping as many plots have been taken up in the last three years. Records are kept on a computer spreadsheet and a manual card index is also maintained for back up. The annual invoice for rent is sent out on 1st February each year; payment is within 40 days and includes in the new tenancy the option for the tenant to set up a payment scheme - four payments a year (based on allotment legislation). Plots with discounts are generally paid for up front.

Tenancy agreements can be terminated for a range of reasons, notably for not paying the rent or not cultivating the plot. Plots which are neglected must be tidied up within a certain period and if they are not, the ALO then writes to the plot holder with a one calendar month's notice to quit. Rarely is the Council able to recover costs of abandonment. A tenant can surrender the plot before the appointed date, but the fee is not reimbursed. The ALO also deals with complaints such as leaking water pipes, damage caused by vandalism or bonfires.

It is clear that there are a large number of transactions involved in each letting, re-letting or termination. Both take up and enquiries have increased in the last three years but no extra staff resources have been provided. Other than the card index it is understood the current process does not provide a great deal of detailed information that can be collated, except by manual investigation. The Council will apparently soon have a new database which will be more user friendly for staff and which should help to streamline this process.

7.1.3 Conditions of letting

The current rental agreement is attached as **Appendix F**. No pony grazing is permitted now. Allotment holders are allowed to keep certain animals and poultry on their plots (even bees are allowed provided people are qualified to handle them). Sheds, polytunnels and glasshouses are all admissible. Plot holders can sell their produce but not from the site itself.

Although there are examples of joint tenancies, most tend to be let to one family member, which means that the lease is terminated if the named tenant dies. Councillors who were interviewed, suggested that rental agreements should be made for families where possible to allow for continuation of a tenancy in these circumstances. Another matter raised by the Councillors was occasions (admittedly very infrequent) where locating a tenant on a particular site had caused problems, such as conflict with another tenant. It was suggested that the Council should reserve the right to refuse a candidate if it was felt that these sorts of problems could arise.

7.2 Letting of vacant plots

67% of respondents to the allotments' survey said they were very satisfied or satisfied with management by the Council. One issue frequently raised by the allotment holders however, is that there is often a slow response from those on the waiting list when approached with an offer of a plot, leaving plots vacant for some time. If the offer of a plot is turned down it can take several months to let, as the next person on the waiting list is then approached and may again turn it down. During this time the plot, which may have been rotivated in preparation for a new owner, starts to deteriorate and needs to be rotivated again. Also if there is a delay, the risk is that the plot will stay vacant for the year by missing the spring planting season. This was also the reason why allotment holders suggested that plots should be re-let far earlier than they are now - preferably in the autumn, although this would initially entail more administration in re-jigging tenancy agreements.

A suggestion from the Council's Portfolio Holder for allotments and others, to avoid delay in letting, was that several people at the top of the waiting list for a particular site should be approached at the same time, with no guarantee of an immediate plot. Those interested would then be selected in the order in which they had been waiting. Respondents should be given a fixed time in which to reply (say two weeks) before it is assumed they are not interested. Although this might be frustrating for those who have bid and are unsuccessful (and would involve more correspondence), it would at least ensure that they got the next vacant plot.

There were mixed comments from current tenants as to whether rotivation of vacant plots was a good idea. Some felt it merely ground in the weeds; others that an unkempt plot would be seen by many as needing too much work. On balance it is felt that an overgrown allotment can be a discouragement to new tenants and it is felt in these cases, that the practice of rotivation should be continued where requested. However, speedier turnover of allotments once a tenant gives in their notice or is given notice to quit, should avoid some of these problems. A simple measure would be to put a reusable plastic sheet over a plot once it has been rotivated to prevent weeds from reappearing.

7.3 Contact with the Council

In addition to the issue of vacant plots, many allotment holders complained about poor communication with the Council from the point of view of talking directly to someone about issues and getting a speedy response to complaints. Many also asked that there should be a full time Allotments Officer. A part-time member of staff will always mean that staff are not always available, however the service is available via the web site, and there is a Customer Service desk which can take enquiries during normal office hours. It is understood that the Allotments Officer regularly visits sites, although this is early in the morning when there are no allotment holders about, so that she can fit other work into her tight timetable.

It is clear that if the request for plots continues to rise there will be a need for more full time resources in future. However even without a full time Allotments Officer it is suggested that there are ways that the Council can improve communication with allotment holders. Although there are only three formal associations, it would be possible for an appointed representative to be created on other sites (with access to the internet) who would provide a vehicle for ensuring information was passed promptly to the Council. The North Lincoln Horticultural Society represents 5 sites in the north, a couple in the south and has a membership of approximately 400. It is understood that they are currently aiming to set up site monitors.

Some allotment holders suggested that a post box could be attached to each site entrance so that any immediate problems could be communicated. It is not however felt that this is necessary, as long as there is a responsive telephone service - even if this is only to explain why problems can not be dealt with straightaway.

For longer term issues, it is suggested that there should be a quarterly meeting between allotment representatives and the Council (it is understood that the NLHS does hold regular meetings with the Council). There should also be ways whereby allotment holders can occasionally meet with Council Officers either on site or perhaps via a drop in session. There was a perception from some allotment holders at the workshops that money was being wasted by the Council and others imagined that income from rents would pay for the costs of improvements. In this light, a detailed explanation of costs would also be helpful in dispelling some of these myths.

There used to be a booklet giving guidance for new allotment holders on how to garden. It is suggested that another booklet be produced or new tenants be directed towards suitable guidance from the web.

7.4 Letting policy

Allotments in Lincoln are currently available to people from outside Lincoln. This number comprises around 130 plots or 11% out of the total lettable plots. On most sites this amounts to one or two plots, if that, but 38 plots at Long Leys are in this category and 38 at Canwick Hill. There are also 18 plots let to outsiders at Boultham Glebe and 11 at Boultham Park.

In total there are 48 plots let to outsiders in the north where there are at present surplus plots and it can therefore be argued that, if these tenancies were terminated in order to offer them to City residents, there is no guarantee that they would be let. On the other hand 82 plots are let to outsiders in the south of the city and in Canwick Hill, (which lies outside the City boundary) where there is currently a shortage of plots.

It would seem unfair to terminate any existing tenancies for outside residents, many of whom will have had their allotments for some time. In future however, especially when new housing is being developed, it is considered that the principle should be that each area should cater for its own local demand. It is suggested that from now on the Council implements this proposal (informing adjacent Councils of this) and notifies outsiders of this, who are on the waiting list.

The question then arises as to whether the Council should surrender the Canwick Hill site, in whole or in part - which it currently manages and for which it pays a small rent. 23 plots have deliberately been left vacant here with the intention of the owners Jesus College Oxford eventually taking the land back. This matter was raised in 2001 and in 2005, but the owner has recently made further overtures to the Council to surrender this area, which it is understood they wish to take out of allotment use. (It should be noted that this is not a statutory allotment site). This would be accompanied by a rise in rent for the remainder of the site.

Of the 52 plots in use only 14 plots here are let to people who live in Lincoln. Given the fact that the City of Lincoln currently caters for far more North Kesteven plot holders than this within its boundaries, it is suggested that the Council should relinquish the 23 plots as requested by the site owners and initiate talks with North Kesteven Council with a view to it taking over the lease and management of the rest of the site, thereby relinquishing the City Council's responsibility for this site.

The other privately owned (non statutory) site is at South Common in the south of the City. There has been no suggestion by the owner that he wishes to reclaim this site for other purposes, but for avoidance of doubt and given the current shortage of sites in this vicinity, it is recommended that the Council continue to lease and manage this site for allotment use.

7.5 Distance criteria

At present the distribution of allotments does not relate to demand and it is therefore considered that plots, wherever they are, should continue for the present to be let on first come first served basis. However eventually it is hoped that sites will be better located in relation to the populations that they serve such that most allotment holders can walk there. Therefore it is suggested that letting policy be reconsidered in five years or so, once new development has begun, to add a clause to encourage new tenants to go to their nearest allotment site unless already full. (The responses to the allotment holders' questionnaire indicated that this to a large extent already happens with most allotment holders travelling only short distances to their sites).

7.6 Rental system

Plot sizes are more or less the same as they were 10 years ago, and range from 51-100 sq yds to a maximum of 951-1000 sq yds although the average is around 300 sq yards (roughly 300m²). This has led to 19 rental bands being created based on 50 sq yard blocks, with rents rising with size from a minimum of £39.80 per annum including water to £65.50 at the highest level, also including water (not accounting for any discounts). There is a 50% discount for pensioners and the unemployed, and there is also a discount of 10% for holding 6-10 allotments and 20% for 11 plus allotments. The water rate is the same for full size plots as for half size plots.

Both the Leader and Portfolio Holder for allotments, also several of the allotment holders felt that this was far too complicated a system. It is suggested that the rents be separated into four bands in future, with water rates adjusted accordingly (including for half size plots) and included within the overall cost. This will lead to some winners and some losers but is a far simpler system than now. (Levels of rent are looked at in the next chapter).

All the surveys suggested that the 50% discount for pensioners and the unemployed should continue, but were equally adamant that the discount for multiple plots should be abolished. In fact most tenants felt that one plot was quite sufficient for most families, or in some instances, two plots. It is therefore recommended that this should be the maximum offered from now on, with current tenants with more than this being asked to relinquish their additional plots.

7.7 Summary

It is recommended that:

- The letting system continue to be computerised to streamline the process;
- In order to speed up letting of vacant plots a number of potential allotment holders should be approached simultaneously with 2 weeks for reply and with no guarantee of an immediate plot. Those interested would then be selected in the order in which they had been waiting;

- Rotivation should continue but only where sites are in a bad condition and where requested by future tenants. Once rotivated, a reusable plastic sheet should be used to prevent weeds from reoccurring;
- Better communication routes to the Council are essential, especially in dealing with repairs/complaints. Recommendations include appointing a site representative for each site and a responsive telephone service.
- For longer term issues, there should be quarterly meetings with representatives from sites or with chairs of associations speaking for several sites. There should also be ways whereby allotment holders can occasionally meet with Council Officers either on site or perhaps via a drop in session. (A detailed explanation to allotment holders of costs at one of these meetings would be helpful to dispel some of the myths about costs that currently exist);
- A booklet/directions as to where to find guidance in gardening would be useful for new tenants;
- Current tenants who live outside the City of Lincoln boundary should retain their tenancies. However, it is recommended that no new requests for plots should be accepted from residents who live outside of the City boundary and any such prospective tenants who are currently on the waiting list should be informed of this change in policy.
- 90% of tenants on the Canwick Hill site are not from Lincoln. It is suggested that the Council should relinquish the 23 plots on the Canwick Hill site, as requested by the owners and initiate talks with North Kesteven Council with a view to it taking over responsibility for the lease and management of the rest of the site;
- The other privately owned site (at South Common) should continue to be leased and managed by the Council for allotment use.
- It is suggested that letting policy be looked at once new development is established, to add a clause to encourage new tenants to go to their nearest allotment site unless already full;
- It is also suggested that the current 19 rental bands be abandoned and rents be separated into four bands only, with water rates adjusted accordingly and included within the overall cost;
- Discounts for pensioners and the unemployed should continue;
- Discounts for multiple plots should be abandoned. future tenants and existing tenants should only be allowed a maximum of two full plots;
- Rental agreements should be made for joint tenancies where possible, to allow for continuation of tenancy if a partner or parent dies;
- The Council should reserve the right to refuse a candidate for a particular site; and.
- As the request for plots continues to rise there will be a need for more Allotment Service resources in future.

8. Revenue Budget

8.1.1 Background

The Allotments section is not a self financing business unit. All rents go into corporate funds against an income target. As the allotments are not self financing they need a subsidy from the Local Authority.

Revenue costs comprise staffing costs, ongoing grounds maintenance and repairs, water, a small rental for the two private sites and small miscellaneous costs. Maintenance spend includes direct works by the Local Authority and its contractors on routine tasks such as grass cutting of common paths, cutting back vacant plots, removal of invasive species, tree work, vermin/pest control and repairs - for instance to damaged stand pipe taps.

It is also noted that where plots fall vacant and are not re-let quickly the Local Authority has to spend a not inconsiderable effort and cost in clearing overgrown plots. Last year 100 lettings were achieved, but in one or two cases conditions on plots that became available for letting were so bad, it cost considerable sums in remedial work before re-letting was possible.

Offset against this is income from rents and water charge (the latter is subsidised with the local authority losing circa £10,000 per annum on this item).

8.1.2 Revenue expenditure 2010-11

Income from fees and charges in 2010-11 was £23,635 consisting of rents received (£15,134) and charges for water (£8,500) and miscellaneous income. Around half of allotment holders received discounts - mainly because they were pensioners.

Maintenance and other operational costs were £46,136. Support costs i.e. management and administration, (relating mainly to staffing and overheads at £72,257 and capital works charges at £29,854) – a total of £148,247. The net cost to the authority therefore after deducting income, was £122,967 in that year.

8.1.3 Revenue expenditure 2011-12

Income from fees in 2011-12 is expected to grow as more plots are let, exceeding the £23,420 in the budget. Repair and maintenance costs have reduced to £27,351 and support costs i.e. management and administration costs have also reduced to £69,800 from the previous outturn of £72,257. The net cost has therefore fallen. It should be noted that there is no advertising spend as there are waiting lists.

8.2 Options for a reductions in revenue funding

8.2.1 Raising rents

It is not envisaged that providing 4 bands for rental income in lieu of nineteen will have much effect on income overall, since initially the aim should be to raise the same total amount as before. However, one way of obtaining more income to plough back into much needed improvements would be to raise rents including the correct charge to cover the cost of water. Rents across the country vary from 1p per sq yard (in Bolsover) to as much as 55p a sq yard (in Runnymede).

A comparison with nearby authorities suggests that Lincoln is not out of kilter with these at present. Boston for instance currently charges 9p a sq yard but has no discounts. South Holland charges 16p a sq yard,

again without discounts. Lincoln by comparison charges between 6p per sq yard and 33p per square yard depending on the size of plot (with an average of 20p per sq yard) but half its tenants have 50% discounts. Notwithstanding this, it is understood that many Councils are set to increase their rents this next year. Boston's average rent for example is proposed to rise from £25 per plot to £200.

Looked at on a weekly basis Lincoln's rents seem low. For instance rent and water charge for an average 300sq yard plot at £46.90 works out at less than £1 per week (50p for those with discounts). Rents have been traditionally kept quite low especially as the average plots are often quite large. Increases in rents are probably overdue, as the last major changes were a 16% rise in 2002/3 and 23% rise in 2003/4. There has been substantial increased demand and inflation in recent times. 57% of allotment holders stated they are prepared to pay more rent. However increases suggested varied from £5 to £180 generally in line with what they were already paying. Most people felt that 50% discounts for pensioners and the unemployed should remain.

Clearly if all Lincoln's 1,156 allotments were subdivided to create plots of the same size (say 300 sq yds) the income of the City's allotments could rise significantly from current levels if a standard charge was applied. This of course is not practicable where there are existing plots, but may be possible on sections of neglected sites. The Council has promoted this approach more recently.

Whilst rents are allowed to rise in line with inflation a decision to raise them significantly needs a resolution by the relevant Committee. Although rents have been set for 2012/13, it is suggested that for future years a modest rise in rent above inflation (to include the actual cost of the water charge) should be considered, with those in the lowest band paying relatively less and with any increases in overall income put back into ongoing maintenance. If this were to happen it is suggested that provision for payment by instalments (as is available now), should be well publicised.

8.2.2 Self management

The Local Authority currently manages the sites and there are no intermediate organisations although there are three allotment associations which offer advice to allotment holders. 59% of respondents to the allotment holders' survey were happy for their site to be self managed if there was somebody prepared to take it on.

There are many examples of allotment sites being run by self-managing organisations and trusts. Experience elsewhere suggests that these arrangements come in a variety of guises and are usually tailored to the requirements locally. They can be a very well organised and productive way to manage allotments. There are several different types of trust - common characteristics are a fixed structure, set objectives with membership generally re-elected annually. Trusts have the advantage of being able to apply for grants not available to a local authority. Were such a trust to take on letting responsibilities it would be important for it to abide by the Council's charging structure and proximity principle for letting.

One of the key issues will be whether the local group has critical mass in terms of numbers, and is sustainable as an entity. Regardless of the model used, it is likely that the Council would need to retain some supporting resources.

A useful website with guidance may be found at:

<http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/resources/ari-factsheets-mainmenu-147/fundraising>

There have been no approaches to date from groups seeking to run their own sites, but it is suggested that the three current organisations be asked if they wish to extend their role. The question however will probably be focussed on new allotments - if developers of housing have to provide dedicated space for this

purpose. In the long term, although self management can result in a well used and organised site, it is not clear that there would be any substantial savings to the Council.

8.2.3 Sponsorship

It may be possible to obtain sponsorship for allotments, for instance from a seed company, in return for an advert at the entrance. Allotments would have to be in a prominent location where passers-by could see the advert. It is not however anticipated that this would provide very much of an income.

8.2.4 Grants

In discussions with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for allotments it was noted that it may be possible to obtain grants - for improving biodiversity for instance. It was accepted that these aren't always available to local authorities. It is recommended that capacity be developed to facilitate Officers seeking out opportunities for obtaining grants for biodiversity and for other improvements.

8.2.5 Other revenue savings

Given the current budgetary position it is difficult to envisage any further substantial savings that can be made, especially as the number of let plots increases, so will the ongoing maintenance costs. Speedier letting of plots will reduce the need to rotate plots and income is set to rise as a result of the increase in numbers of tenants. Nearly 80% of respondents stated they were prepared to carry out work or maintenance if the Council supplies them with materials. It is noted that there are risk assessment and health and safety issues that would need to be addressed.

Offset against this is the suggestion that a skip should be provided on every site once a year (two on larger sites and there is a need for further vermin control. In addition, in the long term it is also suggested that a full time resource looking after allotments may be needed.

8.3 Summary

- The net cost to the Council allotment service in 2011-12 is £85,560. This has reduced from 2010-11; in 2012-13 it will be £82,800;
- Most respondents to the allotment holders' Citizens' Panel questionnaires felt that the 50% discount for pensioners and the unemployed should remain;
- 57% of allotment holders stated they are prepared to pay more rent. However, increases suggested varied from £5 to £180 and were generally in line with what they were already paying. It is suggested that a modest rise in rent above inflation (including the actual cost of water) should be considered on in future;
- It is suggested that provision for discounted rents to be paid in instalments should be well publicised;
- Although there has been no interest in self management up to now, the three allotment associations should be asked if wish to manage allotments, subject to the proviso that the Council should control the level of rents and letting policy;
- It may be possible to obtain sponsorship for allotments. However, it is not anticipated that this would provide very much money;

- It is recommended that resources be provided so as to permit Officers to seek out opportunities for obtaining grants for biodiversity and other improvements; and
- No further revenue savings are anticipated overall. Savings may be possible by speedier letting of plots and rent from the increase in number of tenants. Also most respondents stated they were prepared to carry out work or maintenance if the Council supplies them with materials (although this probably would not produce very much saving and there are insurance issues).
- Offset against this is the suggestion that a skip should be provided on every site once a year (two on larger sites), need for more vermin control and further resources needed overall as numbers of tenants grow.

9. Options for major capital funding

9.1 Overview

There was major capital cost in 2009/10/11 for clearing plots to facilitate the removal of loose asbestos comprising £250,000. Further capital spend of £50,000 is expected for this year to complete the removal of asbestos. The capital works charges are being taken out of the support costs in the current year's budget.

The cost of essential improvements needed is estimated to be around £720,000 and desirable improvements estimated to be a further £130,000 as a minimum. There is also the future cost to take into account for supply and laying out of new sites to service Lincoln's growing population over the next twenty years, forecast to comprise between 240 and 560 plots, depending on housing growth.

9.2 Section 106 obligations/Community Infrastructure Levy

The Council is currently embarked on a joint Local Development Framework (LDF) with the adjacent districts of North Kesteven and West Lindsey. In the case of expansion within the City of Lincoln boundaries, new housing is proposed in the west and in the northeast quadrant of the City, that is, near those areas which are currently without allotments, which also contain pockets of deprivation. The third area earmarked for development is to the south of the City boundary in North Kesteven. It should also be remembered that there is currently a shortage of plots in the south of the City which also needs to be addressed.

A way of paying for new plots would be through s106 obligations. Developers of new housing would be required to provide new allotments, either within their development, or nearby. A commuted sum, from which the interest could be taken, could also provide for ongoing maintenance. Alternatively in areas where there are existing allotments, monies could be provided for refurbishment.

The recently published National Planning Policy Framework (which replaces Circular 5/05 on the subject) states that planning obligations or section 106 monies linked to development must be:

- Relevant to planning;
- Necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms;
- Directly related to the proposed development;
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development; and
- Reasonable in all other respects.

Currently s106 monies in the Council are linked to playing fields, but do not include allotments. Provided there is a transparent analysis of need and provision is proportionate to proposed development, it is clear that s106 monies can be used for new allotments.

Use of s106 monies would be subject to the necessary underpinning in planning policy – which in the absence of current local policy in relation to provision of allotments, would rely on policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Discussion with Lincoln's planners has indicated that they would also wish to see a comprehensive needs assessment for allotments to support this. Primarily they see the focus on alleviating poverty and disadvantage, also carbon reduction, by making allotments accessible. The strategy should identify what provision is needed, quality of that provision and where there is the greatest need. Several recommendations from this report are therefore essential to underpin any obligations:

1. That the distance that allotment holders should be from their allotments should ideally be under 10 minutes walk;
2. That new allotments should be targeted to areas of deprivation;
3. That a standard of 27 plots per 1,000 households can be justified using present trends; and
4. That a specification should be derived from the guidelines for an ideal design in **Appendix D**.

It is not clear, under recent legislation, whether it will be possible to use s106 funding in the long term for provision of allotments, since in many (but not all) respects it will be replaced by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) after April 2014. The CIL looks comprehensively at planning obligations and is already being examined by the Council's planners in relation to major infrastructure, including the new bypass. Since it is dependent on viability, it should also be emphasised that the CIL is unlikely to fund fully all the facilities required by new housing and other development. (A separate study issued with this report looks at the implications of using CIL as opposed to s106 funding).

Given the uncertainty about ongoing need once this recession is over, there will also be a need to adjust the standard for allotment provision, if demand falls. Agreement with adjacent authorities involved in the LDF will also be advisable.

9.3 Sale of land

The waiting list indicates that while there is a shortage of sites in the south of the City, there are 48 requests for 116 plots in the north of the City or a minimum of 68 surplus plots in the north of the City. Taking into account the proportion of multiple requests in relation to the number of individuals actually seeking plots, this figure is more likely to be around 90 surplus plots. There is an argument therefore that in order to fund essential improvements some land should be sold for housing in the north of the City.

With a relatively good market in Lincoln for housing, underpinned by the lack of sites within the City for new development, allotment land in the right area could, with the benefit of planning consent, raise healthy prices. The average house price of £131,000 (2010) should mean that an acre of allotment land could achieve, in the best areas, prices of above £400,000 per acre. At £400,000 an acre, 2 acres (0.81ha) would pay for all the essential improvements needed.

The Ermine site comprising 0.92ha (or 21 plots) and currently vacant would be an ideal candidate for this purpose and leave sufficient plots to cover any rise in local demand. However it is understood that the Cathedral authorities have asked if they can use this site to quarry stone to repair the Cathedral. If this were to happen there may be an opportunity to exchange this site for nearby land that has already been quarried. An alternative would be to sell other authority owned land for housing and dedicate the return to funding improvements to allotments.

The Council's Community Services have suggested that the Burton Ridge site could be sold for other uses. However it should be pointed that this site is within a designated Green Wedge (policy 43); It is also part of an area designated as Basic Natural Stock (policy 44B) and a Critical Natural Asset (policy 44A) – all of which are "saved policies" from the Local Plan. In addition it is on a steeply sloping hill (posing difficulties for construction) and has spectacular views over the City. It is therefore highly unlikely that this site would be released for development and although it might be turned over to public open space, this would still incur maintenance costs.

Any of these suggestions would require confirmation that they meet with current or emerging planning policy. In the case of the Ermine site, or for that matter for any other underutilised allotment sites in the north of the City - all of which are statutory, the matter would also have to be referred to the Secretary of State. He/she would need to be convinced that there are surplus plots in this particular area and those currently wishing to go on the Ermine/alternative site can be accommodated close by.

9.4 Summary

It is therefore recommended that:

- The Council uses developer contributions towards the funding of new allotment sites or assist with refurbishing existing sites;
- The Council consider the sale of Ermine allotment site or alternatively identify at least 2 acres (0.81ha) of land in the north of the City which it can sell for housing (subject to planning policy) and use the proceeds to pay for improvements to allotments; and
- If an allotment site is chosen, that the Council then seek permission from the Secretary of State to formally declare the site redundant.

It is also recommended that Planning Service is invited to consider:

- Contributions towards new allotments from either s106 obligations or the CIL, for allotment provision linked to housing development; and
- A report to consider the potential for housing development on the Ermine site, or if this proves unacceptable, the potential for housing on other nearby Council owned sites.

10. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to provide a strategic direction to deliver a financially sustainable allotment service that meets demand, has a satisfactory standard of infrastructure and operates fairly. It was also requested that the outputs should be fit for use by the authority to support the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

There are 18 sites managed by the City of Lincoln (and a one plot site); all but two of these are Council owned statutory sites, with a total of 1153 plots. This includes approximately 106 unlettable plots, some of which are to be prepared for reuse as 66 plots. Demand has fallen steadily for the last four decades although more recently it appears that this trend is reversing and occupancy is currently 89%.

An extensive consultation exercise was carried out with allotment holders and with the Citizens' Panel. Over a third of allotment holders are now women. However the age distribution is still very much biased towards older age groups with 13% of allotment holders describing themselves as disabled. Ideal travel times to allotments are no more than twenty minutes by walking or car, with many preferring a journey of less than ten minutes and it is recommended in the interest of sustainability, that up to 10 minutes walking distance be adopted as a standard.

Allotment holders are in the main happy with their conditions, with some exceptions. Most important requirements are water supply, security and to a lesser extent, drainage. Parking, collection of rubbish and facilities for disabled people are also felt to be desirable. An audit of sites informed by tenants' views indicates that 'essential' improvements to sites would cost in the order of £815,000. 'Desirable' improvements would cost a further £130,000 or so.

Allotments are currently distributed in the northern parts of the City and in the south including one site to the southeast located in North Kesteven. There are no sites at all in the southwest and few near the north east of the City, which also contain some of Lincoln's most deprived areas and where there is likely to be some latent demand. Indications are that there are sufficient sites overall to meet the current, as well as any latent demand. However, plots are in the wrong place to satisfy even the present waiting list with a surfeit of sites in the north and a deficit in the south. This is especially as one large site at Simon's Hill is highly unpopular.

If current demand was to remain constant there will be a need for between 240 and 560 new plots by 2031, depending on the extent of housing growth. These should be located in areas scheduled for development to the west and north east of Lincoln and to the south (areas already deficient in sites). Past trends indicate that the demand may start to fall again once the current recession is over. However there are a number of factors linked to food security that suggest otherwise and this estimate will need to be regularly monitored.

Although allotments holders are generally happy with the Council's management, two concerns were frequently raised in the surveys - the problem of plots being left vacant for some time before being re-let and communication with the Council, particularly as regards the response to repairs/complaints. It is suggested that to avoid delay in letting, several potential allotment holders should be contacted at the same time. Suggestions for improving communication include site monitors, formal meetings, drop in sessions and increased visibility of staff at sites. Other suggestions include simplifying the charging structure and letting a maximum of two plots per applicant(s) from now on.

About 10% of allotments are presently let to people from outside Lincoln. Although current tenants should be allowed to remain, in future it is recommended that, in the interests of proximity, sites in Lincoln should only be let to Lincoln residents (allowing some discretion along the border) and that talks should commence with North Kesteven, regarding transfer of the lease and management of the Canwick Hill site to them. The currently vacant area at that site should be relinquished straightaway.

The cost of the allotment service is approximately £85,560. Roughly half of tenants receive discounts, which it was agreed by most should continue. 57% of allotment holders indicated they were prepared to pay more rent (generally a modest amount) and a modest rise in rents is recommended for 2012-13. More income from increased numbers of tenants and speedier rotation of plots will save money. Most tenants offered to carry out maintenance if the Council supplies them with materials (subject to insurance issues) and two thirds were happy for their site to be self managed if there was somebody prepared to take it on. However these measures would make only a small difference to reducing ongoing costs and there are increased revenue costs anticipated if occasional skips are introduced and there is more vermin control. Also it is anticipated that more resources will be required in future to run the service.

The report looks at ways to fund major improvements. For the short term it is considered that new sites should be paid for from developer contributions from s106 funding and this requirement should be built into the Council's CIL. In the meantime it is suggested that sale of 0.8ha (2 acres or so) of one of the surplus northern sites would provide immediate funds for improvements. The Ermine site which is at present empty would suit this purpose provided permission from the Secretary of State was achieved. An alternative would be for Council land elsewhere to be sold for housing. Both prospects would be subject to ratification by planning policy and in the case of any statutory allotment site, would require Secretary of State approval.

11. Recommendations

In respect of the current service it is recommended that:

- In order to speed up letting of vacant plots a number of potential allotment holders should be approached simultaneously with 2 weeks for reply and with no guarantee of an immediate plot. Those interested would then be selected in the order in which they had been waiting;
- In order to facilitate better communication between allotment holders and the Council, sites should be encouraged to appoint a site monitor and the Council to improve its responsiveness to requests for repairs;
- For longer term issues, it is suggested that there should be a regular meetings between allotment representatives and the Council;
- There should be visits to sites by Officers more frequently or an annual drop in session;
- Rotivation should be offered to new tenants for free where requested and if the plot is in bad condition; once rotivated, consideration should be given to using a reusable plastic sheet or similar to prevent weeds from reoccurring;
- The letting system should continue to be computerised to streamline this process;
- Rental agreements should be made for joint tenancies where possible, to allow for continuation of a tenancy if a partner or parent dies;
- The Council should reserve the right to refuse a candidate for a particular site;
- A booklet/directions as to where to find guidance in gardening would be useful for new tenants;
- Taking into account the proximity principle enshrined in planning policy and allotment holders' views, tenants should ideally be less that ten minutes walk away from their allotment;
- For this reason letting policy should in future include a clause to encourage new allotment holders to go to their nearest allotment site unless already full;
- Current tenants from outside the Council should retain their tenancies. The Council should not let new tenancies to people living outside of the City in future (subject to some discretion along borders), with other authorities catering for their own local demand;
- The Council should relinquish the 23 plots as requested by the owners of the Canwick Hill site and initiate talks with the North Kesteven Council with a view to it taking over responsibility for the lease and management of the rest of the site;
- The other privately owned site (at South Common) should continue to be leased and managed by the Council for allotment use.
- It is suggested that the current 19 rental bands be abandoned and rents be divided into four bands only, with water rates included within the overall cost;
- Discounts for pensioners and the unemployed should continue and the right to pay by instalments be well publicised;
- Discounts for multiple plots should be abandoned and future tenants (and existing tenants when these are re-let) should only be allowed a maximum of two plots;
- It is suggested that a modest rise in rent above inflation should be considered in future years, to include actual water charges;

- The three allotment associations should be asked if they wish to manage allotments subject to the proviso that the Council should control the level of rents and letting policy;
- The Council should explore opportunities for sponsorship and grants for biodiversity;
- As the request for plots continues to rise and other duties are introduced there will be a need for more Allotment Service resources in future to manage this;

In respect of major improvements needed to existing sites and future provision it is recommended that:

- The Council notes the assessment of work to be carried out and costs of 'essential' and 'desirable' improvements in Chapter 5, on the basis that this is indicative and will need to be verified once the work is commissioned;
- On the basis that there are surplus plots in the north of the City, the Council should identify 0.81ha (2 acres) of land for sale in this vicinity.
- The Ermine site should first be considered for sale to pay for improvements to allotments. The Planning Service should be therefore be asked to consider the potential for housing development on this site and if this is unacceptable to investigate other suitable Council owned sites in this vicinity;
- If an allotment site is chosen for release, the Council should then seek permission from the Secretary of State to formally declare the site redundant;
- New allotments should be provided in the northeast and south west of the City, particularly near where there are pockets of deprivation; there is also a need to redress current deficiencies in the south;
- Based on current expressed and estimated latent demand, the standard for new plots should be 27 plots per 1,000 households. However given the fluctuating demand for allotments in the past this should be regularly monitored;
- Taking into account housing growth figures, allowance should be made for between 240 and 560 new plots or (9.2ha to 21.4ha) up to 2031, depending on levels of growth and allowing for full occupation of current sites;
- The specification for new allotments should be derived from the guidelines for an ideal design in Appendix D;
- The Council should use developer contributions (s106 obligations or CIL) to fund provision and ongoing maintenance of new allotment sites or where there are sites close by, to assist with refurbishing existing sites; and
- The Planning Service should be invited to consider how this might be implemented based on standards in this report relating to accessibility, locational criteria (including areas of deprivation), plots per 1,000 households and the specification for design.

Acknowledgements

Cllr Ric Metcalfe	Leader
Cllr Nannestad	Portfolio Holder for Allotments
Steve Bird	Head of Community Services. Leisure and Sport
Caroline Pritchard	Community Services Manager
Dave Charysz	Open Spaces Officer
Lisa Turner	Allotment Officer